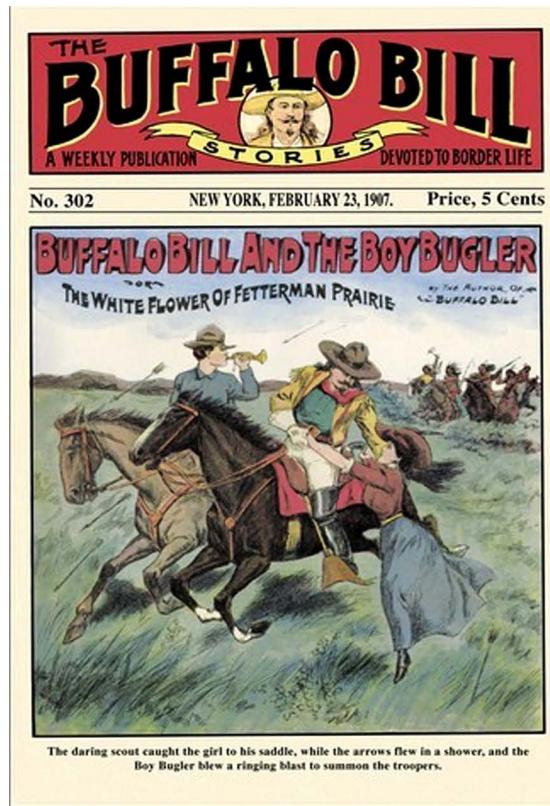


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THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 70-82 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1907, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Beware of Wild West imitations of the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are about fictitious characters. The Buffalo Bill weekly is the only weekly containing the adventures of Buffalo Bill, (Col. W. F. Cody), who is known all over the world as the king of scouts.

No. 302.

NEW YORK, February 23, 1907.

Price Five Cents.

Buffalo Bill and the Boy Bugler;

OR,

THE WHITE FLOWER OF FETTERMAN PRAIRIE.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

OLD ROMAN NOSE, THE UTE.

Buffalo Bill was cantering easily along the trail to Fort Fetterman.

His hat was off, for after the heat of the day and the long ride, he enjoyed the cool wind that came down from the hills.

A handsome man was the noted scout. Horse and rider seemed one, so firm was his seat in the saddle. A graceful man was he, too; and with a look of high daring on his face and in his eyes.

As he thus cantered along, the sharp bark of a rifle sounded, and a bullet whistled so close by his head that he felt the wind of its flight.

Instantly he threw himself over on the side of his horse, for safety, and drew and cocked his revolver.

From under the neck of his startled horse he looked out at the spot where the rifle had sounded, expecting to hear another shot.

He saw the bushes waving there; and that showed that

whoever the murderous rifleman was, he was making haste to get away.

The scout spoke sharply to his prancing horse.

Then, still with his body shielded by the body of the horse, he guided the animal toward the bushes, his revolver ready for use.

He did not know but that an ambush of enemies was there; yet the movement of the bushes did not indicate it.

Then he beheld a single, shabby figure running through the bushes, trailing an old rifle.

The scout swung up in his saddle for a better look.

The runner was an Indian, clothed in cast-off garments of white men—one of these degenerate and disreputable specimens of the aborigine which are produced by bad whisky and contact with the lower classes of white men.

Buffalo Bill instantly drove his horse in pursuit.

"Halt!" he shouted, raising his revolver.

The Indian only ran the faster, clinging to his gun, and tearing his way through the bushes in a manner that

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increased the number of rents in his already dilapidated clothing.

"Halt!" the scout yelled again.

To emphasize the command, he fired a shot, that cut up the sand near the Indian's scampering heels.

The shot but added wings to those heels and sent the redskin on with increased speed.

But the Indian was no match for the horse, and the scout drew up to him rapidly.

"Halt!" he yelled again.

The Indian turned at bay, seeing he could not escape, and lifted his rifle to use it as a club.

It was an ancient weapon, a muzzle-loader, and useless except as a club.

He aimed a furious blow at the scout.

Buffalo Bill dropped the revolver into the saddle-holster. Flashing forth his lariat, he launched it at the redskin's head.

It settled round his shoulders, and the movement of the horse jerked the red man from his feet, dragging him over the sand.

The scout leaped down, with a word to the horse, and rushed upon the Indian, just as the latter struggled up and cast off the noose of the lariat.

The scout had an end of the lariat in his hand.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried, as the Indian stood before him.

In anger, he lashed the Indian across the head with the end of the lariat.

"Me kill all white men!" screamed the Indian, striking at him.

Then the scout saw that the Indian had been drinking, was more than half-intoxicated, and he regretted that he had, in a moment of angry impulse, used the lariat-end on him, richly as he deserved even a severer castigation.

The Indian, in a rage, lifted the rifle in an effort to brain the scout.

The latter caught it, jerked it from his hands, and in so doing threw the redskin sprawling to the sand.

As he rose the Indian drew his knife and rushed upon the scout with inconceivable fury, being in such a rage that he almost foamed at the mouth.

"Me kill!" he screamed.

Buffalo Bill coolly caught the knife-hand, twisted the knife out of it, and pushed the Indian back.

"See here," he said, facing the redskin with stern mien, "do you know that many white men would kill you for a thing like that? What do you mean by it?"

"Me kill!" screeched the Indian, helpless in his rage.

"You are drunk!" said the scout, contemptuously.

He looked closer at the Indian, scanning his puffed features, under their coating of dirt and grease.

"And I think I know you. You are Old Roman Nose, the Ute."

He recalled the time when Old Roman Nose had been a considerable figure on the border.

Once the old chief had led a band of his braves against a body of white troopers, and had stood up before them in a severe battle.

But in later years Roman Nose had been conquered by the white man's fire-water, a thing that often downs white men as well as Indians.

Since that time, as Buffalo Bill had heard, a son of Roman Nose had become chief in his place.

Yet he could not doubt that the deposed chief still exerted a good deal of authority among the Utes; and that he was the father of the new chief would of itself give him influence.

"Roman Nose," he said, "I don't want to have trouble with you. You shot at me from ambush without any provocation, and then you tried to strike me with your rifle. In anger I lashed you with the lariat. You deserved it, and I ought really to give you a good thrashing. But you are half-drunk, and for that reason I don't hold you fully responsible."

The disarmed redskin stood before him, stillen now and silent.

"If I give you your rifle and knife, will you go about your business and not trouble me, nor any other white man?"

Roman Nose did not answer.

"What made you shoot at me?"

"Me kill all white men!" said the chief, his face wrinkling with hate.

"You are in a rage against the white people? What for? Has any one of them injured you recently?"

Roman Nose stamped on the ground in fury; he tore his long hair, he raved with many words, but he did not bring forth any proper answer.

By and by Buffalo Bill returned to the Indian his gun and knife, lectured him soundly, and then let him go, feeling he could not do anything else.

But he sat on his horse by the trail with revolver ready, as a warning against treachery, as he saw the redskin vanish into the waving bushes.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLOWER OF FETTERMAN PRAIRIE.

If Buffalo Bill could have transported himself backward in time an hour or so, and at the same time could have placed himself at the humble home of Letty Brockton, he would have had an answer to the questions he hurled in vain at the head of Old Roman Nose.

Letty Brockton was the prettiest girl in that section, and was so charming and winning in all her ways that she was called "The Flower of Fetterman Prairie."

She had not only won the good-will of her neighbors, but had won, also, the heart of a dashing young fellow.

That dashing young fellow at the moment of his introduction to the reader was seated on the horse-block before the door of the small house, with Miss Letty beside him, a position that was to him thoroughly enjoyable.

He was dressed in the blue of the United States Army, and at his side rested a bugle, showing the position he held in the troop.

Though he was a year older than Miss Letty, who was just turned sixteen, he was called the Boy Bugler by the company; for, two years before, when he had entered the service to become bugler, he had been but a stripling, and seemed a boy, indeed.

Now he was broad-shouldered and tall; and if Miss Letty had told you her mind she would have declared to you her opinion that he was the handsomest, and altogether the most captivating, young fellow she had ever seen.

In sitting thus beside the youth who had won her heart, Miss Letty quite forgot many things that troubled her at times; chief of them being that her father had squandered all his savings on a mining-claim that held no gold, and becoming dispirited on account of it had lately taken to drink.

But Letty forgot that when the Boy Bugler was nigh. His name was Wilson, and she called him Reed.

"Reed," she said, as a shadow passed over her face, "there's one thing I've been wanting to tell you about, but have been afraid to."

"Afraid to tell me anything?" he said reprovingly, but with a laugh.

"Well, you are so hot-tempered, you know; just—just like father, at times!"

"And you're afraid I'd be cross with you, eh?" still laughing. "Well, banish that from your mind."

"No, not afraid you would be cross with me; but with—"

She hesitated and stopped.

"Yes?" he said. "Go on."

"Well, it's that old Indian you saw here the other day. I don't know what's got into him. But he looks at me so strangely when he comes that he scares me. He was here yesterday, and he said he wanted to see me alone, as he had something he wanted to tell me. That frightened me, and I slammed the door in his face."

"Served him right, the old rascal!" said Wilson.

"But he stayed round outside, muttering; and at times he would come to the door and rap on it, and say he wanted to see me. I was so frightened I almost fainted; and he hung round for an hour or more. I had the door locked, and he couldn't get in. But it made me dreadfully nervous and afraid!"

The young man's face had flushed to an angry red, as she saw.

"That's why I was afraid to tell you. You will want to punish him, or something, when you meet him."

"The scoundrel! he deserves it, doesn't he? That was yesterday?"

"He's been coming almost every day lately, since father has—has been away in the town so much. And I—"

"You haven't spoken to your father about it?"

"No; for the same reason that I have been afraid to tell you. He would fly into a rage, and perhaps would attack the Indian, and then there would come trouble."

"Why, the old redskin villain, he ought to have his head smashed! And I think I'd like to do it."

"But you won't?"

She laid her hand gently on his arm.

"If something isn't done to teach him manners, he'll continue to annoy you," he urged.

"Perhaps not," she said.

"Well, he will!"

He looked at her, and seeing the fear, as well as the love, in her face, he drew her to him.

"Letty," he said, "we must get married. This is no place for you. You are a brave girl, and you haven't thought about it. But this is no place for you here, so far off from every one. You must say that you will marry me soon, and let me take you to some civilized place."

"To the fort?" she said roguishly.

She released herself, and he saw a trace of tears in her eyes, though there was happiness there, too.

"Well, that's a good place; or in the little community by the fort. It isn't a city; but it isn't desolation, like this place. I wonder your father has stayed here so long."

"It's the mine," she said pathetically.

"And that has never amounted to anything, and never will."

"No, it never will."

"Then, why stay here?"

"I—I don't think I ought to leave father yet," she said, when he renewed his pleading; "he needs me now more than ever."

He wanted to break into bitter words against her father, because of his neglect of this daughter; but, remembering that she loved her father in spite of everything, he did not.

"I hate to leave you," he said, as he felt at last that he must go.

When he had gone a mile or two on his way toward the fort, he turned his horse in the trail and started back. Something whispered to him that he might be needed. He could not get out of his mind what she had said to him about the offensive Indian.

CHAPTER III.

ROMAN NOSE SEEKS A WIFE.

Reed Wilson, the Boy Bugler, was hardly out of sight of the girl's lonely home, when the Indian she had spoken of and feared made his appearance there.

As the reader has guessed, this Indian was Old Roman Nose, somewhat the worse for drink, which did not improve his looks nor the geniality of his manner.

He seemed to wish, however, to be gracious; for, when he saw that the sudden manner in which he had popped out before her frightened the girl so much that she could do nothing but sit and stare at him with wide-open eyes, he tried to smile.

It was a queer effort. The wrinkles at the corners of his wide mouth went up, and those at the corners of his narrow eyes came down, so that his face looked much like some half-comical papier-mâché mask.

He lurched toward her with an effort, and dropped to a seat on the horse-block by her side, where she had remained sitting, dreaming sweet dreams, after the departure of her handsome lover.

Now she sprang up, and with a little cry of fear dashed at the door.

But she delayed her going by catching her toe on the door-sill, and before she could get inside and close and fasten the door, Old Roman Nose was at her heels.

He put his head and shoulders through the doorway, braced his shoulders there, so that she could not close the door.

She fled before him, and he followed her into the house.

"Perty squaw!" he said, standing in front of the door so that she could not get by him and pass out. "Injun like perty squaw."

He held out his filthy hands toward her.

He smiled again and ogled her.

"Me like take perty white squaw. Me heap big Injun. Got plenty all things; plenty blankets and furs, plenty pony, plenty venison. Me like take white squaw to keep my lodge warm."

No doubt the old rascal thought he was making an effective speech. The things he enumerated represented wealth to an Indian. It didn't matter that the old rascal had none of the things named, and was lying; he thought the effect would be the same.

Probably he did not see why he should not attract a handsome white girl like this.

He knew there was a time not so remote when he had really been a "heap big Injun." He had been the principal chief of his tribe then, and he had successfully led warriors to battle. He had been a noted hunter. Even now he had a son who was chief of the tribe, in this period of his own degradation and irresponsibility.

He hardly comprehended that even with the Indians who knew him best he was no longer of importance.

He was not likely to consider himself anything but "heap big Injun" when he was drinking; for the white man's tempting fire-water made him feel very large and brave, and strong of heart. It made him feel rich, too, and great and wonderful.

It has been noticed to have the same effect at times on white men!

So he held his hands out to the girl, in what he doubtless thought an alluring way, and assured her that he liked the "perty white squaw," and desired to honor her as the light and warmth of his wigwam.

She screamed, seeing she could not get out, and ran to the window.

It was barred, and her trembling fingers were not equal to removing the fastenings.

"White squaw not go!" he said, astonished and becoming angry. "Me like white squaw!"

When he advanced, she turned on him, like an animal at bay.

"Keep your hands off me!" she cried, with a fierceness that astounded him quite as much as anything else she had done.

In desperation she grasped a dull knife from a shelf near, and lifted it.

He stood before her, admiration now the chief feeling that moved him.

An Indian likes courage and a show of bravery, even when it is used against himself; he is a stoic, and hates a show of cowardice. Though his flesh may quiver, he will go to the stake singing his death-song and taunting his foes to his last breath. Hence her desperate courage pleased him.

"Ho, ho!" he chuckled, grinning in a way that made him more hideous than before. "The white squaw would be a warrior and fight with the knife. She shall sit in the council-lodge and go on the war-trail, instead of staying with the women. Ho, ho!"

He grinned like a demon, and spoke in Ute.

She held the knife aloft.

"Come near me, you miserable scamp, and I'll drive this into your heart!" she shouted, keyed to the highest notch of excitement.

He stood before her, holding his sides with suppressed laughter.

But when the girl, driven still further by desperation, came toward him, with the wild thought of fighting her way out of the house, he was not pleased, but caught her arm, making a leap that was surprising, when his condition is recalled.

His grip on her wrist made her cry out with pain, and the knife dropped with a clatter from her nervous fingers to the floor.

Then he threw his arms round her and dragged her toward the door.

"The White Flower of the Prairie shall bloom in the

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lodge of the great chief," he said, in Ute, as he thus pulled her along.

In her wild fear she clutched at his hair, struggling, and tried to get hold of the wall near-by to stop her progress.

She screamed aloud.

He took alarm at that, and clapped his big hand across her mouth, stifling her cries.

But she broke loose and screamed again; and, shaking off his drunken clutch, she darted past him through the door.

He leaped in pursuit, mouthing his rage now, and drawing his knife.

As he did so he heard a trampling of hoofs, and saw before him a handsome young fellow on horseback, who was riding straight toward him, as if to ride him down.

The old Indian stopped, his face flaming with sudden hate.

Why had this young paleface appeared to interfere?

The knife of the chief whirled with a hissing motion through the air, aimed at the breast of this youth.

If Old Roman Nose had been soberer that knife would have cleft the heart of the Boy Bugler.

It cut through the shoulder of his coat, making a big rent, though it did not touch the flesh.

The girl screamed again, running toward him with hands outstretched, her words wild and incoherent.

Reed Wilson flung himself out of the saddle. In his wrath he rushed upon the Indian, and with a blow of his fist knocked him to the earth.

Old Roman Nose saw a million of stars, more or less, as he went down under that smashing blow.

But the liquor he had taken made him insensible to bodily punishment.

He rose to his feet, and turned to run for his rifle, which he had left at the corner of the house before appearing before the girl.

Wilson tripped him, so that he fell again, sprawling, digging his nose into the sand.

Then with no gentle manner the Boy Bugler kicked him.

"You scoundrelly reprobate!" he shouted, as he administered the kicks. "I ought to kill you!"

Roman Nose would have received much worse, for the youth had lost discretion, if the girl had not caught him by the arm.

"Don't—don't!" was her hysterical cry.

"Why not? Doesn't he deserve it, and far more than I can give him?"

"Yes, but—"

"What did he say to you?"

She did not answer.

Roman Nose, having been thus relieved of the assaults of the furious young man, was hastily scrambling to his feet.

"Get up, you old scoundrel!" cried Wilson. "And if you come here again, or are even seen around here, you'll get much worse than that next time. You villain, I'll kill you, if you annoy this girl again. Do you understand that?"

Roman Nose, having gained his feet, staggered again toward his gun.

A trickle of blood was flowing down from his prominent nose, and that did not decrease his fiendish appearance as he glared at the youth while beating his retreat.

Wilson drew his revolver and cocked it.

"No—no!" said the girl; "you must not—not shoot him!"

"I don't intend to," said Wilson, "unless he tries to shoot me. If he does, then down goes his meat-house. He has insulted you, and that makes me want to settle with him, and I won't stand any nonsense from him now."

Roman Nose saw that affairs had gone against him.

The "party squaw" whose beauty had caught his Indian fancy had strangely refused to become the light of his lodge, which was singular enough to him; and this young white man stood threatening him with a drawn revolver.

Discretion, he saw, was the better part of valor.

He could go now, he fancied, and return again some other time; while, if he stayed and tried to make trouble, or tried to shoot this athletic young white man, whose fists were so hard hitting, he might be killed, and that would end his desires and his actions forever on this earth.

So Old Roman Nose grabbed up his gun; and, instead of trying to use it, he swung it under his arm, and started off from the house at a canter, which took him quickly out of sight.

"Oh, I am so thankful that you came back!" the girl cried hysterically.

"And yet you wanted me to be easy with that old desperado?"

"He is an Indian, and he has been drinking."

"So much the worse for him, then. He got no more than he deserved, when I knocked him down and kicked him."

"But—but trouble may come of it!" she urged.

"No. He'll simply keep away from here now; while, if he had got off without punishment, he would feel that it was safe to come again. It was a lucky thing I turned back."

"Thank Heaven, you did!" she cried, her voice quivering as she clung to his arm.

"I don't know why I did," he said; "but perhaps it was what you had told me. I had a feeling that I ought to ride back and make sure you were all right. If I hadn't come—"

She shivered and began to cry, for her nerves were all aquiver.

"There, there!" he said, and put his arm round her. "You're all right now. Your father will be home soon. I'm going to stay here until he comes. But, really, you oughtn't to live here any longer, and I'm going to tell him so."

He kissed her, and led her to an old seat on the horse-block by the door.

"You don't think that Indian will come back?" she said.

"No; he's too scared for that. He's still running, I don't doubt."

"It may make trouble with the Indians," she said.

"Pooh! That old ragamuffin make trouble? He's not worth thinking about further."

He tried to reassure her, even though he was himself troubled in mind over what had occurred, and sure almost that trouble would come of it.

Old Roman Nose was running and staggering on, swearing vengeance against the Boy Bugler, and against all palefaces.

He was heading for the village of his tribe, when, in the trail, he beheld the great scout, Buffalo Bill, approaching on horseback.

His drunken rage sought to be revenged on this white man.

He dropped into the bushes by the trail, lifted his rifle, and, when the scout came nearer, he fired at him, with the result already set forth.

CHAPTER IV.

FOGGY IKE.

Hastening on toward the Ute village, after his unfortunate encounter with Buffalo Bill, which had resulted in his second castigation at the hands of a white man within a few hours, and with his heart a very volcano of hatred and anger, Old Roman Nose beheld the figure of another white man in the trail.

Instantly, in his blind rage, he threw up his rifle, pointed it at the breast of this white man, and, before the latter could do anything to protect himself, he had pulled the trigger.

He had forgotten, however, to reload his gun, and in his drunken fury he had not recalled that.

The hammer of the gun fell with a dull click, and brought no explosion; and then he remembered that his rifle was not loaded.

By this time, too, he had seen that he knew this white man.

The white man had recognized him, and was roaring at him:

"You old devil, what d'ye mean, tryin' ter shoot me, a friend of yer's?" he howled. "Do ye want me ter beat

yer wu'thless head off? By ther leapin' panthers, I've a notion ter do it!"

"The Badger!" said Roman Nose, dazed by his discovery of the identity of the man before him.

"Yes, it's the Badger, you old fool? Who'd ye think I was, anyhow? Er air you too drunk to see straight? I begin ter believe it!"

The man was wide and fat, with a bloated body, a puffy face, that showed a scraggy gray beard, and grayish hair; the gray beard and hair causing the Indians to call him the Badger.

In the towns and at the fort he was called Foggy Ike, and called himself that in the company of white men at times, seeming rather to take pride in the name.

He was "foggy" because much of the time he was groggy, and his ideas seemed in a haze through drink.

Otherwise, he was known as a loafer and ne'er-do-well, who was too lazy to try to make a living in the settlements, and, therefore, had taken up with the Indians, finding life easier for him there, where the men lounged and hunted and the women did the work.

He was a worthless white man, ready for any evil, but as a rule too lazy, or too intoxicated, to carry out anything which required much exertion.

Because he was drunken, and lived with the Utes, he had a fellow feeling for the drunken old chief, Roman Nose, and they were fast friends, whenever they were not quarreling.

Roman Nose stared when the irate white man shouted at him.

"It is the Badger," he repeated. "And the Badger is the friend of Roman Nose, the great chief."

"But that don't give ye no rights ter shoot me," said Foggy Ike. "There is a piece of Scripter which says 'when a man tries ter knock you down, hit him fust! Now, what was you wantin' ter shoot me fer, and by so doin' makin' me want ter retaliate and shoot you?'

The old chief stood before him a moment in bewildered thought.

"It was the white squaw," he said; "the one they call the White Flower of the Prairie. The Badger knows her. She lives over there."

He pointed a dirty finger.

The face of Foggy Ike took a crafty look.

"What about her?" he asked. "What's she been doin' ter ye? Did she give you that bloody-lookin' proboscis? There is a piece o' Scripter which says 'that when blood is shed then ther blood of the one that sheds it kin be taken.'"

The rascal knew less about the Scriptures than he did about almost anything else, yet he fancied he knew a great deal, and was always quoting what he supposed to be Scriptural texts. They were, some of them, fearful and wonderful things, justifying every crime in the calendar.

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Albert O. Lord.

"I will have his blood," declared the chief, with the fire of fury; "I will have the blood of both of them."

He spoke in Ute.

"Ther blood of both of 'em? Then there was two? 'When a thing ain't clear,' the Scripter says, 'then it's a thing hard ter understand.' This hyer you're givin' me is one of them. What d'yer mean?"

Roman Nose began to explain, with much sign-language and waving of his rifle.

He told of the "purty squaw," of the young man who had come to the house and so ill-used him there, and of the other man, the horseman, who had treated him no better.

Foggy Ike's bloated face shone with a reddish delight.

"Come erlong, and we'll talk erbout this," he said. "In ther multiplication of counsels that is wisdom," as the Scripter says. We'll consider this thing; and it'll also may be healthy ter be movin', in case either of them men has foller'd ye. You want this hyer girl fer yer squaw?"

He led on at a quick pace, away from the trail, burrowing out of sight in the bushy country, taking the chief with him.

As he went he was thinking rapidly.

He had an undying hatred of the girl's father, Dick Brockton. He had once robbed Brockton, and Brockton had retaliated by having him arrested and incarcerated. Foggy Ike had never forgotten, nor forgiven, that.

He stopped, with Roman Nose, when they were some distance from the trail and well concealed.

"Now tell me that over ag'in," he said.

Roman Nose retold the story, from his standpoint, and Foggy Ike commented.

"Well, what's ter hender ye frum takin' the girl, if you want her?" asked Foggy. "That's ther Injun way, ain't it?"

Roman Nose swore in bad English, and rubbed the bruises that he had received at the hands of Reed Wilson.

"An' you want revenge," said Foggy. "You want ter git even with that young feller, o' course. It's nat'rel and proper that you should. 'Revenge is sweet,' says ther Scripters."

"I kill him!" said Roman Nose, breathing out slaughter against Wilson. "I lay for him in the brush, and shoot him as he passes along the trail."

"But that don't git ye the girl, does it? What you want is ther girl. Take her, and then if Wilson follers ye, why, plug him with yer old deer rifle. Plug any feller that follers ye."

Roman Nose vowed wildly that he would slay every white man on Fetterman Prairie; that he would burn their houses, and torture prisoners. He raved, and he tore at his tangled hair.

His raving was sweet to the ears of Foggy Ike.

"The fust thing ter do," said Foggy, "is ter git the

girl. You want her. What she thinks about it ain't nuthin' ter do with it. 'Ther man is ther boss, and woman is ther servant,' as ther Scripter says. Take her."

"Ah! How?"

That was the thing that Roman Nose wanted to know.

Foggy Ike had plans for that, too, and they appeared promising to Old Roman Nose.

The half-drunk and angry Indian did not see, nor did he dream that Foggy Ike was using him as the monkey used the cat, to pull his own chestnuts out of the fire.

Foggy Ike wanted revenge on Dick Brockton. He had sworn he would have revenge, but had never done anything, and the chances were that he never would. Here was a man he might stir up, and thus gratify his malevolent feeling as well as if he done something against Brockton himself.

"You can slip ter the house some dark night, and git her, and make a break with her fer ther hills, yer know. Er take her ter the village straight off, if ye like."

Roman Nose might have given more thought to the personal peril which would follow this, if his mind had not been too much swayed by liquor and a desire for revenge.

He did not see clearly; he saw only his desires, and took no note of the consequences.

"Ter-night wouldn't be bad fer ther trick," went on Foggy Ike craftily. "I might help yer a bit, if it comes handy; but, o' course, I couldn't do much more'n ter advise ye and give ye my best wishes. She's a ternal handsome girl, as I've noticed, and I don't wonder that yer've took a shine ter her. It's jes' like everything else that a feller wants; ther way ter git her is ter go and git her. So, if I was you, I wouldn't hesitate a minute. And it'll serve her right fer ther way she treated ye; and serve that young feller right that kicked ye so scandalous."

"The idee of a chief like you bein' treated that way by a no-count white man! It's redic'lus, and not to be stood at all. I'd square things, if I was you; and I'd do it by takin' ther girl."

Foggy Ike's persuasions were so convincing that the rum-soaked old chief began to feel that he was a much-abused man, and that the thing he ought to do to assert his dignity as a chief was to seize this white squaw and make off with her into the hills, and defy the youth who had shown him such ill will.

Foggy Ike told him that after her first burst of anger and tears the white squaw would be obedient enough, and that if she wasn't, he could beat her into submission, in the Indian way.

That was the way the Indian men used Indian women, and generally the beating had a good effect, as the old chief had noticed; the squaws became obedient after they had been beaten a few times and knew that disobedience merely meant more beatings.

"The Roman Nose will do as his white friend says," declared the chief, seizing his rifle as if he meant to attempt it at once.

CHAPTER V.

ROMAN NOSE ACTS.

In what was really a disobedience of duty, Reed Wilson returned that evening to the isolated home of the girl he loved.

He had seen her father, Dick Brockton, drinking with some boon companions in the town, and he feared that Brockton would not get home until late, if he got home at all that night.

But Wilson, as he tied his horse to the hitching-post and entered the house, where he was greeted warmly by the girl, did not see the Indian who lay concealed near-by in the darkness.

Foggy Ike had made a journey to the town, returning with "fire-water," to put courage into the heart of Old Roman Nose.

Foggy Ike was resolved that this chance to revenge himself on Dick Brockton should not fail through any laziness of his own.

Roman Nose had literally hugged that fire-water bottle to his heart, and had drunk from it long and often.

Foggy Ike, who stayed with him, and drank occasionally himself, would not let the "noble red man" have as much of the stuff as he wanted, nor as much as would have disabled him for the work that was to be done.

So, Old Roman Nose had just enough of the white man's crazing liquor under his belt to give him a reckless and desperate courage, and cause him to dismiss from his mind all thoughts of consequences, but not enough to disqualify for the task he meant to execute.

Roman Nose's little black eyes glittered, as he saw the Boy Bugler ride up to the house and dismount.

His brown fingers itched to pull the trigger of his rifle, and have the muzzle of the rifle at the same time aimed at the heart of this youth, whose heavy kicks he could still, in memory, feel.

But his natural craftiness held him in check.

The time to act had not yet come.

So he lay out in the darkness, watching the house as a cat watches the hole into which a mouse has run.

He had quite as much patience, too, as a cat; for, though the young man's stay was long, the hour of midnight having come before he came out, Roman Nose hardly moved in all that time.

The Indian's fingers clutched the trigger of his gun again, but he did not lift the weapon; yet a sibilant sound, like the hiss of a snake, came from his lips.

"The White Flower has no one with her now," was his thought, as he saw the Boy Bugler ride away, and

listened to the receding sound of his horse's hoofs. "Now is the time for which Roman Nose has waited."

He crept as slyly and softly as a cat up to the door of the house, as quickly tried the lock, and then crept on round the house, for the purpose of trying the little window at the rear.

The door and the window were locked.

He withdrew a step or two, and stood considering the situation.

He had been so quiet in his movements that the girl was not yet aroused to her peril.

He would have delayed till morning, and would have sought to take her when she opened the door then, but fear of the return of her father caused him to act without further delay.

He crept round to the door, and after a moment of hesitation rapped on it.

"Who is there?" came in the startled voice of the girl.

"White man—sick; want in!" said Roman Nose, trying vainly to make his voice and speech sound like that of a white man.

The girl was not deceived; she knew the old Indian had returned.

"Well, you can't get in!" she said, with emphasis.

"White man very sick!" moaned the Indian.

"You can't come in, if you are; and I've got a gun in here, and it's loaded."

Not dismayed, Roman Nose knocked on the door and renewed his importunities.

"Get away from that door," shouted the girl, "or I'll send a bullet through it!"

Though she was much frightened, she tried to be courageous, and to make the Indian fear her.

Roman Nose had a healthy fear of bullets, and he moved back from the door.

Again he studied the house, and the situation.

Then he groped about, until, some distance from the house, he found a log of wood.

Coming close up in front of the door, he made a quick run, and rammed the door with the log.

The girl uttered a little cry of fear and excitement when the log pounded on the door.

"If you try that again, I will shoot you!" she declared; but her voice trembled in spite of her efforts to keep it from doing so.

Roman Nose stepped to one side and waited.

When no bullet came through the door he smashed it again with the log.

The girl was as good as her word this time. Her rifle cracked and the bullet cut through the door, driving a big splinter before it.

But Roman Nose remained untouched.

He did not know, though, but she had a repeating rifle, and he jumped to one side, dropping the log.

He had thought of another way of getting into the house.

A tree grew near the corner of the house, shading it.

He contrived to draw down a drooping branch of this tree, and to so tie it that it kept swaying in the wind, thus making a sound which he hoped would cause her to think he was trying to dig in through the logs there, or under the logs.

Then he hurried softly to the other side of the house, and began to climb up the corner logs of the wall, mounting with such cleverness that his years seemed to have dropped from him.

Thoroughly aroused now, and buoyed by the liquor, he was using his greatest care and strategy; and for those things he had been noted in his younger days.

He succeeded in gaining the roof.

Crouching there, he heard the girl shouting threats at the imaginary Indian at the corner of the house, where the wind-swayed limb was making a scratching sound.

His soft moccasins enabled him to creep across the roof with no more noise than a cat.

At the apex of the roof, on that end, was the big chimney of a wood fireplace, a chimney big enough to admit his body.

He gained this chimney and stood a minute listening.

Out on the prairie all was still. The hoof-beats of Wilson's horse had long since ceased to reach him, and no sound came now to show that any person was near.

He looked down the chimney into the fireplace.

It held no fire, but the light of the little lamp on the table illuminated it, and revealed it plainly.

Then he swung himself over quietly, and letting go he dropped into the fireplace.

His thudding fall was the first intimation the girl had that he was not at the corner of the house where that mysterious scraping noise sounded.

She turned, with a cry of fear and horror, as she saw him there.

As he leaped out of the fireplace into the room she threw up the rifle to shoot him.

But her hands trembled so, and his dodging motion was so quick that, when the gun cracked and flashed, the bullet missed him.

Then he was on her, catching her by the wrist and throat.

"White squaw shoot Injun!" he snarled.

He pushed her against the wall.

She screamed. Then his heavy fingers compressing her throat made further screaming impossible.

The shock of his assault was too much for her overstrained nerves, and she fell against the wall in temporary unconsciousness.

Roman Nose had never seen the like. Indian women do not faint.

His first thought, therefore, was that in desperation

she had stabbed herself; and he looked for a knife-wound, or blood.

He saw none.

She had tumbled against the wall, and then slid helplessly to the floor, where she dropped in a limp heap.

Roman Nose knelt to listen to her heart-beats and respiration. By that he saw she was not dead, though her pulse flickered and seemed feeble.

"Ugh!" he said to himself. "The white squaw can be carried, and will not scream. It is good!"

He lifted her in his arms, carried her out, and laid her on the grass by the door.

Then he tried to remove the evidence of his visit, so far as it was likely to reveal that he had done the work. He even went to the fireplace and stirred the ashes about, to destroy the tracks of his moccasins, and he tried to remove such tracks from in front of the door outside.

The girl was stirring while he did this, but he kept an eye on her.

Before he had quite finished she came suddenly back to herself, though her mind was clouded still.

She jumped up and tried to run, when she saw Roman Nose looking at her from the door.

"Ugh!" he said. "Squaw no go!"

He sprang out and caught her by the wrist.

Her startled scream rang out.

He drew his knife, and with a jerk pulled her close up by the door. With threats he made her stand there while he closed the door. He wanted the house to have as much as possible its normal aspect from the outside, so that any one in passing would not be drawn to it by a belief that all was not right.

Then he caught the terrified girl in his arms, and ran with her out into the darkness.

She fought and screamed as he did so, but there was no kindly ear to hear. Reed Wilson was far away, and the girl's father was still lingering, half-intoxicated, in the town hard by Fort Fetterman.

CHAPTER VI.

A DUEL TO THE DEATH.

Morning was dawning when Dick Brockton rode up to the door of his home.

Brockton had been a cowboy, before he had turned miner and prospector, and he could be counted on to ride a horse without difficulty even when he was not able to walk.

He found some trouble in dismounting, for intoxication had weakened his legs, though his head was not so muddled as it had been many times in the past month.

Throwing the reins over the hitching-post, with the intention of letting the horse stand there until his daughter Letty could put the beast in its stable, he strode with reeling gait up to the door.

He knocked, knowing that when his daughter was alone she locked the door after darkness came.

When there was no answer his anger began to rise. He knocked again, heavier and louder.

Then he called, anger giving his words emphasis.

"Letty!" he shouted. "Letty, git up and open the door!"

But Letty did not appear and open the door.

A sudden fear struck through the heart of Dick Brockton.

"Ain't you there, Letty?" he called.

When this received no answer, though several times repeated, his fear increased, becoming a certainty that Letty was not in the house, whatever had befallen her.

The effect of the liquor began to leave him, driven out by the shock of the discovery that Letty was not at home.

In his way, Dick Brockton loved Letty. He knew she was worlds too good for him, yet he loved her, though he had so cruelly neglected her.

The increasing daylight enabled him to see the imprints of the log of wood in the timbers of the door, and he saw the bullet-marks. But Roman Nose had closed and locked the door as well as he could.

Brockton struck a match, fishing it with clumsy fingers out of his pockets.

By its light he saw the prints plainly, and saw that near one hinge the door was splinters.

A cry of alarm and remorse was wrung from him.

"Oh!" he wailed. "What's become of Letty? What's happened to her?"

The last vestige of the liquor fumes was driven from his brain.

He seized the log which the Indian had used, and which was lying not far off, and with it he broke the door open, thus gaining access to the house.

He saw as soon as he had crossed the threshold that Letty was not within.

He ran to her little room, calling to her; searched all the likely and unlikely places, wailing her name; and, failing to find her, he ran out into the yard.

"Whoever done this," he said, with an oath, "I'll have his heart's blood!"

He did not yet know that it was the work of an Indian, but thought, rather, that some villainous white man of Fetterman was the guilty party.

He ran back into the house, and got Letty's rifle, with which she had fired at the redskin.

Then he began to search the ground about the house.

The sun was rising by this time and gave him light with which to prosecute his search.

He worked with amazing energy. He was no longer the irresponsible vagabond he had been recently, but a man of strong will and furious anger; a man whose heart was torn with anguish over the uncertain fate of his

daughter, and who was resolved to follow her, and avenge her.

The fact that Old Roman Nose had been forced to carry the girl away from the house gave to Dick Brockton his first clue to the fact that the perpetrator of the outrage was an Indian.

The weight of his burden had, at one point, caused the redskin's moccasin to sink into the soft soil, and it had left its imprint there.

Dick Brockton came upon that moccasin-track.

He stared at it with disbelieving horror.

"An Indian!" he said. "An Indian!"

He tried to follow the tracks, but Roman Nose, with the exception of that slip, had succeeded very well in concealing them.

"An Indian!" Brockton repeated, as he made this agonized search. "What does it mean?"

He went back and secured his horse.

For a minute after mounting it he looked off in the direction of the town and Fort Fetterman, wondering if he ought not to ride post-haste there for help.

But that involved delay, and he felt he could not delay.

So he resolved that he would himself try to trail down the fiend who had carried away his daughter.

After riding to the point where he had found the moccasin-track, Brockton dismounted and led his horse.

Once more he tried to spell out the trail.

His fears for his daughter, and his angry desire for revenge on the man who had carried her off, quickened his faculties.

He found other footprints, and though they were but indentations in the grass, they served to guide him.

Then he observed that after leaving the house well behind him the abductor had headed straight away in the direction of the distant Ute village.

This accorded with, and added proof to, the theory, now become a certainty, that the abductor was an Indian.

Having settled the fact that the man was an Indian, a Ute, and was going toward the Ute village, Dick Brockton lost no further time in trying to spell out the very faint trail.

He struck spurs to his horse, and was soon riding in the direction he had settled on as the right one.

After a wild gallop of five miles he came in sight of an Indian.

This Indian was stalking ahead at a swift gait, and he was alone.

Brockton drove his horse on until he was close to the Indian.

The latter had heard him, and turned round when Brockton shouted.

The redskin was Old Roman Nose.

"Stop, there!" yelled Brockton.

Roman Nose lifted his rifle.

"What does the white man want?" he demanded.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"I want my daughter," yelled Brockton. "I know you're the scoundrel that came to the house and carried her away. Surrender! By heavens, I'll have your life!"

If he did not comprehend all the words, Old Roman Nose had no difficulty in comprehending Brockton's tones and manner. He lifted his rifle and put himself in a defensive attitude.

"I saw you near the house last week, and I know you're the rascal that's responsible. Now, where's my daughter?"

The old chief's reply was to throw his rifle to his cheek and shoot at this angry white man.

The bullet cut a burning welt on Brockton's arm, and increased his rage, without disabling him.

He pitched up his own rifle, returned the shot, and then seeing that he, too, had failed to bring down his man, he drove his horse straight at the defiant redskin.

With a swift motion the old chief put his hand into a fold of his blanket. A tomahawk flashed, the sunlight on its sharp edge, and then whistled through the air.

Brockton dodged it by throwing himself on the neck of his horse, and heard it whistle over him.

Then he tried to ride the chief down.

When the chief slashed the horse in an effort to disable it, Brockton sprang to the ground.

He drew his knife as he did so.

Redskin and white man came together, knife clashing against knife.

"Where is my daughter?" Brockton yelled, as he delivered a blow.

"The dog of a white man dies now!" was the reply of the chief.

is stabbing blow was delivered at Brockton's heart.

Brockton writhed aside as he returned the blow, and the knife slit his side; his own knife went into the chief's arm.

In another second the two men were streaming blood, as they hacked and slashed at each other.

It was a deadly fight with knives from the start.

Neither man was in the best fighting condition; for whisky had left its weakening marks on both; but in that they were evenly matched, and so one had no advantage over the other.

Round and round they dodged and jumped, striking, slashing, parrying, now and then slipping.

Brockton drove his knife against the chief's breast, but it struck a rib and was turned aside.

At about the same time the point of the chief's knife tore a hole in the side of Brockton's neck, from which blood poured.

"I'll kill you!" Brockton howled, rushing at the redskin.

Old Roman Nose slipped, regained his feet, receiving a blow in the back before he could get up; but, turning

as he rose, he succeeded in driving his knife into white man's breast.

As the fight continued it became more bloody and furious.

Each fought with desperation, and a courage that, if it had not been so savage, would have been sublime.

The chief fell, and Brockton, jumping on him, drove his knife to the hilt in the redskin's body.

But the dying Indian made his return blow effective, gashing open the white man's side.

Brockton fell across his victim in a dying condition.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG ROMAN NOSE.

Young Roman Nose, the son of Old Roman Nose, was riding his gaily caparisoned pony along the trail that led from the Ute village to the mountains.

There were feathers in the hair of the young Ute, and feathers in the mane and tail of his pony. The pony was smeared with paint, laid on in streaks and stripes; but his own face was undecorated.

He was intending a hunting-trip, not the war trail; when, in turning aside from the trail, to discover what the strange objects were which he beheld on the ground, with a white man's horse not far off, he found his dying father lying under the dead body of Dick Brockton.

The old chief was weakened and his eyes were glazing, but, when Young Roman Nose cried out, the old man recognized him.

Young Roman Nose kicked aside the body of the white man, and drew the chief from beneath it.

"What means this?" he asked, in Ute.

The old chief's eyes brightened, under the influence of hate and a desire for revenge.

"The white man followed me," he said, "and we fought. I have killed him."

There was the ring of the old warrior in his final statement.

"I took his daughter for my squaw," went on the old reprobate, "and he followed me."

"He followed you to kill you?"

"Yes, and he has done it; the days of Roman Nose are numbered."

"Were there other white men?"

"There will be other white men," said the old chief.

"Where is the girl, and who is she?"

"She is the White Prairie Rose. My son knows her. He may have her for his squaw, if he likes, now that I go on the long journey."

"Where is she?"

"The Badger keeps her in the rocks for me. I was hurrying to the village, and——"

He coughed blood, and it stopped his utterance. His strength, stirred into new life, was flagging.

"Why did my father do this?" said the young man. "Are there not women in the Ute village?"

"None so fair as the White Flower."

He gathered his strength again.

"See!" he said, indicating the dead man. "He was killed by Roman Nose. It was in fair fight; but the white men will seek Ute blood for it. My son knows the white men. He knows they will come and——"

Again he choked and stopped.

"What would my father?"

"Revenge on the white men if they come," whispered the dying chief.

He weakened, and for a time could say nothing.

"Where is the White Flower?" the young chief asked again.

"The Badger has——"

"But where is the Badger?"

The chief tried to reply; but he was past further talk; and a little later his breath stopped altogether.

Young Roman Nose rose to his feet, and with sorrow looked down into the face of his father. It was a stern face, now that death had set on it his seal.

The young man looked round, and then at the sky.

"If the white men come," he said, as if speaking to the wind, "Oh, Spirits of my People, give me the strong arm to meet them! Give me the strong arm and the sure eye to avenge the death of my father!"

He did not shed tears, nor did he rave; after that outburst his manner was grave and solemn.

He took the blankets from his pony, and in them wrapped the body of the chief. Then in his strong arms he lifted the body to the pony's back, and lashed it there with his riata of rawhide.

He spurned with his moccasined feet the body of the dead white man every time he passed it.

"The wolves will have thee for their bellies," he shouted, and he spat in the face of the corpse.

He did not try to hide his moccasin-tracks.

He knew the white men had keen trailers who would be able to pick up and follow the trail of his pony, and he could not abandon his pony, for that meant abandoning the body of his father.

Nor did he wish the white men not to know that he was a Ute. To his mind the act was justifiable and deserved praise. The white man had been slain in a fair fight, and with a knife in his hand.

"Oh, noble one," he said, apostrophizing his father, "there will be wailing in the Ute village for the chief who once led warriors to battle! Thou didst die a warrior, most noble one! The women and the maidens shall weep, and shall tell of the war trail of other days. And if the white men come——"

He raised his hand toward the skies, and shook his knife at an imaginary foe.

It was past high noon when the young chief entered

the village leading the horse which bore the body of Old Roman Nose.

He had taken the eagle feathers from his hair and smeared his face with black. He had put black paint in stripes and streaks on his pony; and now, with loud wailing, he threw dust into the air.

This spectacular entrance drew all the Indians to the edge of the village, where some one shouted to him.

"It is Roman Nose," he answered sadly. "No more he goes on the war trail, and no more follows he the hunting-chase. His bow is broken, his gun is lost; or, perhaps they are in the skies, where are the happy hunting-grounds of his fathers."

He beat his breast, and threw dust into the air, even powdering his long hair with it, as an indication of his grief.

The people crowded about him, excited, breathless.

They had not lately cherished very high opinions of Old Roman Nose; but now they were ready to remember only his great deeds of long ago, and to praise them.

"The great Roman Nose was killed by a dog of a white man!" the young chief answered, when they pressed him for particulars. "They fought, and the white man fell, with the knife of the chief in his heart. But Roman Nose was sorely wounded, and the spirits of the mountains called strongly, so that he went his way, and is here no more forever."

The women began to wail, as was their custom. Their loud cries rose on the air. They beat their breasts and tore at their hair; not because they so felt the loss of Old Roman Nose as because it was the fashion to do this in case of death, and even an Indian woman must follow the fashions that are set for her.

The dead body of the chief was taken from the back of the pony before his lodge, and carried within, where it was laid on his cot of skins and covered over, while a guard was set to keep the mongrel village curs from disturbing it.

Young Roman Nose crouched in seeming abject grief in front of the lodge entrance.

The women wailed and the dogs barked.

Friends gathered round the young chief, to offer their sympathies.

"The white man's body will be found, if it does not enter the bellies of the wolves," said Young Roman Nose, "and then the white man will cry aloud for revenge. What shall the Utes do then?"

The chiefs and the warriors had already thought of that. It made them uneasy.

"We will fight," said some of the younger and more reckless. "If the white men come against us, we will fight."

Young Roman Nose had not yet said a word about the abduction of the girl, which had been the direct cause of the tragedy.

His reason was that he did not know where she was, and he had a sly notion that, if war between the Utes and the white man came, he might conclude to take this White Flower into his own lodge.

He had seen her, and he knew that in beauty she was of surpassing loveliness. He already had two wives; but that did not matter; he would add one to their number.

"We will fight," said the young braves, as the chief thought of this. "If the white men come against us we will dig up the bloody hatchet, and will strike them down. Let the white man come against us if he dares."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOY BUGLER AND THE UTES.

Reed Wilson sought an audience with the colonel at Fort Fetterman soon after the drill of the afternoon, when his services as bugler were no longer required, and stated to him his sense of uneasiness concerning the girl.

When the colonel understood the danger she might be in from the drunken Ute known as Old Roman Nose, he told the Boy Bugler to go, and to induce the girl, if he could, to come into the town, where she would have the protection of the fort.

"Her father is a worthless and drunken reprobate, who doesn't deserve to have such a daughter," was the colonel's verdict, in giving his consent. "I don't know whether his wishes ought to be considered in the matter, or not. But I'd talk with the girl, if I were you, and persuade her to leave that lonely place out there, and come in here, where she will be safe."

As the Boy Bugler rode out to Brockton's home, he tried to shape the words he would use in attempting to persuade Letty Brockton to leave her lonely home and come into the town to reside.

But the girl was not there when he arrived.

The bullet-marked and splintered door was all that was needed to tell him of the tragedy which had occurred.

He was sure at once that Old Roman Nose was at the bottom of the trouble, and that he had carried the girl away.

Reed Wilson, the Boy Bugler, was not a trained and skilful trailer, yet he succeeded in discovering the moccasin-print found by Brockton; and he found, also, the tracks which Brockton had made, and those made by the horses.

This trail he followed, in anguish of heart, half-expecting to come at any moment on the mangled body of the girl he loved.

The thing he found, by and by, was the dead body of Dick Brockton, gashed and hacked by the knife of Old Roman Nose.

It was a horrifying discovery.

He followed the trail, as well as he could, that led on from this point, finding that it took him in the direction of the Ute village.

Sure now that the girl had been carried away by Utes, and fearing to lose time by riding to the town with the news, the Boy Bugler rode on, prodded by fear and wild desperation.

The sun was setting when he came in sight of the Ute village.

He surveyed it from the shelter of a grove of aspens. He saw the red sunlight fall on and glorify the dingy skin lodges; he saw men and women moving about, the herd of ponies by the river in charge of some boys, and all the scenes of Indian village life.

Then, listening, he heard the distant wailing of the women, who still yelled their grief for the dead chief.

The Boy Bugler did not understand the meaning of that wailing, being unused somewhat to Indian ways.

He wondered if he dared ride into the village.

The Utes were said to be at peace with the whites; yet he knew that recently there had been many rumors of trouble and of discontent on the part of the Indians.

"She is in there!" he said, at length. "And I will go in! Live, or die, I will know what has happened to her; and, if she is there, I will die fighting for her, if necessary."

It might have been, under some circumstances, so rash a determination that it would have spelled his death-warrant.

Without trying to conceal his further movements, he rode boldly out from the aspens and descended at a canter toward the village.

He observed the excitement that his approach produced.

He galloped up to the lodges, holding the palm of one lifted hand outward before him to signify that his mission was peaceful.

One of the men who met him was Young Roman Nose.

Chiefs and warriors crowded round Young Roman Nose, and behind them women and children pushed and peered.

"Why does the young white man come here?" Young Roman Nose demanded, with a frown of anger.

The warriors grunted sullenly and looked far from pleasant.

The Boy Bugler looked the Indians keenly in the face.

"I come to learn of the white girl who was taken from her home not far from Fetterman this morning, or last night. She was taken, I am sure, by a Ute. If she is in this village, I want to know it."

The eyes of Young Roman Nose glittered with suppressed anger. He was not accustomed to being addressed in that manner.

"She is not here," he said curtly.

"But you know where she is," said Wilson. "If you

do, and I am sure you do, tell me where she is; for I must find her."

His voice rose, and he could not hide his emotion.

"The white man speaks riddles," said Young Roman Nose. "We know not what he says."

"Listen to me," said Wilson, gesticulating, while mutterings of anger grew among the Indians. "I went to her home. She was gone. The door was splintered, and there were bullet-marks in it. I found a Ute mocassin-track, and I followed that trail. By and by I found the body of a white man who had been killed; he had been cut and stabbed. That man was the girl's father. I am sure he was killed while following her, or while trying to follow her, he having also discovered that she was gone."

"I was sure then that the girl had been taken on, and as the trail came to this village, or toward it, I rode in here to ask these questions, and to request you to let me have the girl, or let me see her."

"Has not Young Roman Nose told the white man that the girl is not here?" came the sharp query.

When he heard the name used by the speaker, Reed Wilson looked at the young chief. He was sure now this was a son of the old ruffian he accused of starting all the trouble and of killing Dick Brockton.

It gave him a realizing sense of the fact that he was skating on very thin ice.

"You are Young Roman Nose, the son of Old Roman Nose?" he queried.

"Old Roman Nose is dead," said the young chief gravely. "He has gone to the land of his forefathers. He was my father. His body lies wrapped in skins in his lodge, and the women wail for the loss of a great chief. The white man has heard them."

"You are sure the girl is not here?" questioned Wilson, that being his sole thought.

The face of Young Roman Nose darkened.

He waved his hand significantly.

"That way lies the fort and the town of the white men," he said, with emphasis. "Will my brother ride toward them? He is not wanted in the land of the Utes."

"But the young woman?" said Wilson. "I will not budge until I know what has happened to her."

He looked round defiantly.

"Will my brother return by the way he came?" Young Roman Nose demanded.

"I will not!" said the reckless and desperate young white man. "I intend to look into these lodges—I intend to hunt through this village for her."

He tried to urge his horse forward.

With a pantherlike spring Young Roman Nose leaped through the air at the throat of the man on horseback.

The startled horse jumped, and the white youth and the young chief rolled together to the ground. Young

Roman Nose had caught the Boy Bugler by the coat, fairly dragging him out of the saddle and falling with him.

Some of the braves sprang to the aid of the young chieftain, and in a short time Reed Wilson found himself trussed up like a fowl ready for the basting.

He had succeeded in doing nothing but arousing the anger of these Indians, who had now overpowered him and made him a prisoner.

Yet they did not seek to harm him.

They disarmed him, tied him securely, and then lifted him to his saddle and lashed him there, in spite of his protests and ravings.

Having bound him to his saddle, they led the horse to the edge of the village.

There they set it in the trail, turned its head in the direction of Fort Fetterman, and then gave it some sharp blows with whips.

The horse reared and plunged; then it darted away along the trail at great speed, bearing the Boy Bugler away from the village.

"The scoundrels!" he raved, tugging at his bonds and trying in vain to throw himself out of the saddle. "They've got Letty Brockton there, and I know it; and they do not intend to give her up. They will now conceal her somewhere, and deny that they have her, or have ever seen her. And who will be able to find her? But I'll rouse the country; I'll have the entire troop ordered out; and, if those redskin scoundrels don't deliver her, we'll sweep them from the face of the earth."

CHAPTER IX.

THE UTE MESSENGER.

The sentry at the stockade gate at Fort Fetterman was a much astonished man when Reed Wilson rode up to the gate, bound hand and foot, and tied to his horse.

His call rang out, summoning assistance, as the horse stopped before the gate, with the Boy Bugler swaying weakly in the saddle.

"Man, what's this mean?" was the sentry's question.

"The Utes!" said Wilson, in a voice that trembled and showed physical exhaustion. "Untie me, quick, and take me to the colonel!"

Colonel Vandiver was having a consultation with Buffalo Bill at the time.

Hence, when Reed Wilson was ushered, or, rather, helped, into the colonel's presence, the great scout was there, also, to hear his story.

The Boy Bugler staggered into the chair that was set out for him. His face was so pale it was corseletlike, and his limbs trembled. His muscles were cramped from the long strain to which they had been subjected by the cords. But there was a courageous fire still in his eyes.

Fear for the safety of the girl was there also.

Buffalo Bill sprang to his assistance.

Colonel Vandiver likewise arose and stepped to the side of the young man.

"Andy," he called to his personal servant, "a bottle of wine here instantly!"

But Reed Wilson was telling his story even before the wine came.

Buffalo Bill listened attentively.

"I met that old Indian," he said, before Wilson had finished. "He was near the trail, and tried to shoot me. I haven't any doubt that was directly after you thrashed him for his impertinence. He has sought revenge by carrying away the girl; and, when the girl's father followed, the old Ute killed him."

"I know she is in that village!" panted Wilson. "I ask, colonel, that troopers be sent to rescue her."

His manner was wild and excited.

"If she hadn't been there," he argued, "they would have let me look through the village, to assure myself that she wasn't. They refused me, and they tied me to my horse, and turned me adrift. The whole thing is an outrage that calls for swift punishment."

"I will undertake the work," said the scout quietly.

"Doesn't the way they treated me prove that the girl is there?" demanded Wilson.

"She may be there, or may not be; but what they did is no proof. Perhaps your words or manner angered them. That old Indian, they told you, was dead. He may have been so injured in his fight with Dick Brockton that he died after reaching the village. That would not tend to make the Utes feel kindly toward any white man. There are plenty of reasons why they may have used you as they did, without any one of them proving, or indicating, that the girl is there."

"But she must be followed! Some attempt must be made at once to find her."

"Ah! I agree with you there. An attempt must be made at once."

"And I will go with you, if you undertake it."

"I think you will do well to stay here and regain your strength a little," the scout urged.

The wine had been brought in, and the Boy Bugler swallowed some of it. It seemed to revive his strength.

"I am ready right now," he declared, his eyes shining.

"The first thing to be done," said the scout, speaking to Colonel Vandiver, "is to send out a detail to bring in Dick Brockton's body."

"Very true," said the colonel; "it shall be done at once."

He left the room, to give some personal instructions.

While he was out, a servant came in bringing food for Wilson, ordered by the colonel.

While the Boy Bugler ate and drank, the scout had him retell his story, asking many questions to get the details.

"You will undertake this thing yourself, Cody? It's a

lucky thing you're here. But I'm going with you, or will catch up with you. You will take troopers and ride straight to the village?"

"I shall go first to Brockton's house, and make an inspection of the trail there which you followed, and will visit the spot where Brockton was killed. After that, I shall know better what course to follow."

"But the delay!" cried Wilson. "No knowing what is happening to the girl. The village is the place to go first."

"And if she is not there?"

"But she must be there. Otherwise, those Utes would not have so used me."

Buffalo Bill saw that the Boy Bugler was in no condition for further horseback-riding without a bit of rest, and he told him so.

After that he mounted and rode from the stockade gate, heading straight away for the trail that ran by Brockton's house.

The scout was so thoroughly skilled in trailing that he found no trouble in reading the "sign" about the house.

He saw what had happened with an assuredness that was almost as positive as if he had beheld the acts themselves.

He followed the trail made by Ute and white men to the point where the deadly duel had taken place.

Before that point was gained, he beheld a very faint trail leaving the main one; but did not take it, preferring to inspect first the spot where the fight had taken place.

The detail of soldiers from the fort was already there, having arrived for the purpose of getting Brockton's body.

By them the scout sent messages to the fort—to the colonel, and to the Boy Bugler.

When they rode away with the body of Brockton, Buffalo Bill took the back track.

When he came to the place where the faint trail left the larger one, he got down and inspected it closely, kneeling to do this, thus bringing his trained eyes close to the ground.

He saw that a white man had passed that way, apparently alone. He had borne a burden, as was shown by the fact that his feet cut rather deeply into the grass, making a considerable imprint.

In a little while the scout came upon something more that gave even his seasoned nerves a little thrill.

This something was the imprint of a woman's shoe.

"The girl!" he said, looking at it intently. "Either that girl, or another. A white man carried her to this point; then set her down and compelled, or permitted, her to walk."

He looked about, for the thought of a possible ambush near came to disturb him.

What he saw, some distance away, was the Boy Bugler, who, without proper rest, had ridden out from the fort.

"I admire the young fellow's pluck," was the scout's thought, "but not his discretion. He ought to have remained a half-day at the fort before riding forth. Yet I suppose under similar conditions I should do just the same; and therefore I cannot blame him."

The Boy Bugler had encountered the troopers, and had been directed by them. He swung his bugle when he saw that he had attracted the scout's attention.

"What luck?" he cried, as he came up, drawing rein hastily.

His face was still pale, and his eyes bright; but he looked stronger than when he had reached the fort.

Buffalo Bill hesitated to tell him the character of the discovery just made.

While he still hesitated he beheld, to his surprise, a Ute Indian ride out of the near-by hills and wave a white bit of buckskin, this being meant as a white flag of peace.

"News?" said the Boy Bugler.

"It looks it," the scout answered.

"News of her?"

"We will hope so."

"Ah! it proves that I was right, in saying she is in the Ute village. This Ute comes from there with some sort of an offer. They begin to be afraid of an attack by the troopers."

Both he and the scout rode to meet the signaling Ute, who came on to meet them, waving that white buckskin.

The scout spread forth his hands, palms outward, to indicate that his intentions were peaceful.

When the Indian came near they observed that both he and his pony were elaborately decorated with feathers; but the Ute showed no paint on his face, though he had liberally smeared paint over his pony.

"How!" he said gravely, as he met the white man.

His face was lean, as was his body, and his eyes were black and piercing. He fixed them on the scout, and then drew from his robe a paper.

This he extended.

"Letter!" he said, speaking the word with difficulty, as if he had been coached in pronouncing it.

Buffalo Bill took the soiled sheet of paper, opened it, and read:

MR. BUFFALO BILL.

"My Injun friend what bears this can't speak two words of English, which is the why I have selected him to carry this, as when a man can't talk he ain't liable to talk too much. This letter will do all the talking necessary, and he'll git it to ye. Well, here goes fer my say: I know where the girl is—Miss Letty Brockton; in fact, I kin put my hands on her at any time. She was run off with by an Injun chief. But where she is now I ain't goin' to tell. I'll tell fer five thousand dollars. If this strikes you and the people at the fort as about right, you kin deposit the money at the foot of the broken-top oak

that stands jest at the base of the flat butte a mile east of Brockton's house. I'll git it. But if you play me dirt, er try to, then I won't be responsible fer what happens to the girl. I ain't goin' to sign my name to this, fer I reckon it'll be healthier fer me if I don't. But I'll jest right write

ONE THAT MEANS BIZNESS."

The Indian sat watching the scout and the Boy Bugler as Buffalo Bill read this letter, and he gave the youth a close examination as the letter was passed to him and was read by him.

"This proves that Miss Brockton is in the Ute village, just as I thought," said the Boy Bugler.

"I don't understand it that way," was the scout's answer.

"No?"

"It doesn't say she is in the village."

"It doesn't say she isn't."

Though the writer of the letter had said that he used this particular Indian as his messenger because he could not speak English, and therefore could not talk and answer questions, he had quite ignored the fact, or had been ignorant of it, that Buffalo Bill was well versed in nearly every Indian language of the border.

The scout could speak Ute, if the Ute could not speak English; and so now he asked him in Ute, to the Indian's astonishment:

"Is the girl in the Ute village?"

The Indian's face showed his surprise.

But his native craftiness, and no doubt instructions he had received, caused him to refuse to answer.

"You won't say?" said the scout, when he saw the Ute hesitate.

"That proves she is there, Cody!" insisted the Boy Bugler.

"In my opinion, it may prove that she isn't there."

He repeated his question to the Ute in another form, and watched the Indian's face.

Indians are proverbially able to hide their thoughts and emotions.

But in this case the scout's question so surprised the Ute that he had betrayed his thoughts somewhat, and showed excitement, even though he did not answer.

"What reply shall we send to this letter?" the scout asked of the Boy Bugler. "He wants five thousand dollars. I haven't it, and don't know where it could be raised. I suppose the men of the fort and the town would raise it, though, in a case like this."

"Do you think Miss Brockton would be delivered, if the money was placed where this letter says?" asked the Boy Bugler.

"I don't know, of course."

"Why not follow the Indian?"

"Because the chances are he will return to the village."

"That will be all right, if the girl is there."

Then he cried, with passionate energy:

"Why should we fool with the scoundrelly writer of that letter, or with this Indian? Just tell this Ute that, if he doesn't lead us to the place where the writer of the letter is, we will shoot him!"

"He might lead us," said the scout, speaking out of his own wide experience, "but he would lead us, or try to lead us, into an ambush."

The Indian sat silently on his pony.

Apparently he was waiting for a written answer, to take back to the man who had sent him.

The scout scribbled a message, in these words:

"Tell us where you are, or, at least, who you are, and we will be ready to open negotiations with you."

"W. F. CODY (BUFFALO BILL)."

He folded this, and gave it to the Ute.

"Take that," he said in Ute, "to the man who sent you. It is our answer."

The Indian tucked the folded paper in his blanket, wheeled his pony, and rode away.

The scout and the Boy Bugler sat watching him as he went.

"Now what?" said Wilson.

"That is not the answer the man will be looking for. I gave it to the Indian merely so that he would be sure to return to the man. Now we will trail the Indian, as soon as he has gone on far enough. If he returns to the writer of that letter we ought to find the fellow. And if we find him we are in a fair way of finding the girl."

"Let us hurry, then," said the impatient Boy Bugler. "It drives me wild, to think that Miss Brockton may be suffering every minute we are delaying here."

"Haste makes waste," said the scout. "We shall gain nothing by going too rapidly. But, come on!"

They rode away, pursuing the Ute as soon as he was out of sight.

CHAPTER X.

THE UTE AND THE FIRE-WATER.

Foggy Ike had sent that anonymous letter.

It will be remembered that Old Roman Nose had given the girl into Foggy Ike's charge before that fatal meeting with Dick Brockton.

Foggy Ike had hurried her into the hills, to a secure place of which he knew, that place being a little cavern, where once, in his less lazy days, he had prospected for gold.

He had found no gold, and had abandoned the cavern.

But now he recalled it, and hastened to it as the homing-pigeon hastens to its dovecote.

The girl's hands had been tied together at the wrists, but her feet were free. She used her tongue at times; and if it had not been for Foggy Ike's threatening pistol she would have done something which was more likely to be of service to her.

With the girl tied in the little cavern, and the cavern entrance closed on her, Foggy Ike had sent that message, by a Ute he saw riding by; and there he lay awaiting the Ute's return.

The Ute came back with the scout's message, riding straight to that point.

Foggy Ike was wrathful when he read it.

"They think they're foolin' me," he said to himself, "but they ain't. And they'll find that, when ole Foggy wakes up, he ain't so durn foggy as his name'd indercate. They'll git ther girl, will they, without payin' that five thousand dollars? Well, never."

He drew a small bottle of whisky from a recess in the rocks.

He had bought that whisky to intoxicate old Roman Nose with, and had not used all of it.

It had been a heroic task to refrain from drinking it himself; but Foggy Ike had refrained, and it was the promise of the whisky which had induced this Indian to become his messenger.

"Hyer's yer bug-juice," he said, "jest as I promised."

Then he recalled that the Ute could not speak English, and he dropped into Ute.

"I will give you another glass bottle of this fire-water, if you deliver another letter. Here it is."

He scribbled it:

"Your bluff don't work. Put the five thousand where I said, er I'll kill the girl."

"ONE WHO MEANS BIZNESS."

He gave this to the Indian, who was draining the bottle as soon as his fingers closed on it.

"Ugh!" cried the Ute, making a wry face and rubbing his stomach. "Much good."

"There is more of it to be had, remember, after you take this," said Foggy. "Meet me with the answer at the foot of the Black Butte."

He pointed to the butte.

As soon as the Ute was gone, Foggy Ike set his wits to work.

He was now perfectly sober, a thing which could not always, nor often, be said of him. And when he was thus sober he was a man of considerable intelligence, if totally lacking in conscience.

He saw that he had entered on a desperate game. That name, "Buffalo Bill," signed to the note he had received, was enough to tell him that.

He knew that all manner of thieves and cutthroats, of high or low degree, feared Buffalo Bill; and that, when the scout set out to get his "man," he generally got him, dead or alive.

It was not pleasant to think that Buffalo Bill might soon be on his trail.

He sat turning this over in his mind, as the Indian rode away and disappeared.

"I might take her ter ther village and turn her over

ter Young Roman Nose," he thought; "but, ef I did, whar would I git anything out of it? If I could put my paws on that five thousand, I'd slide out er this section of creation mighty quick, and try ter injy myself in white men's company some'eres fer awhile. But I dunno about that five thousand, sense Buffler is ther man that's with ther young feller doin' of ther trailin'-act. Buffler Bill is a shore ugly devil when he gits started, accordin' to all tell."

He forgot his constitutional laziness, and climbed to the top of the nearest hill, where he looked long across the prairie that opened out at the base of the hills.

He saw his Ute messenger emerging into the prairie.

As he watched, he beheld a sight that somewhat startled him.

Colonel Vandiver, made uneasy by the report brought in by the Boy Bugler, had sent out a scouting body of troopers.

They had followed in the general direction taken by Buffalo Bill.

Foggy Ike, watching from the top of his hill, saw them burst into view and swing in sweeping chase of the messenger he had just despatched.

"By ther great gallinippers!" he exclaimed, standing up in his excitement. "As ther Scripter says, 'It never rains but it pours!' I reckon them fellers air out raidin'; and, yes, they're goin' ter make it int'restin' fer ther Injun that I've sent."

That Indian had seen the troopers. Not liking the thought of coming in contact with them, he veered off to the right, and was soon riding at brisk speed away from them.

Then they started in chase; a chase that Foggy Ike watched with great uneasiness.

"They'll git holt of that letter, and they'll read it; but, what if they do? That's all right; my name ain't on it, thanks ter the sensibility of myself. 'Caution is akin ter genius,' as ther Scripter says, and I was proper cautious that time. Whoo-ee! Thar they go! Looks like a lot o' hounds persuin' of a fox. I'mbettin' on ther fox. See that pony fly! Thar ain't a hoss with ther troopers kin ketch him. But I'm skeered that Buffler Bill won't never git that letter, sense ther Ute has been thus interfered with."

The heavy horses ridden by the troopers were no match for the light-footed and long-winded pony ridden by the Ute. It drew away from them.

Soon the Ute was so far in the lead that he thought it safe, and the course of wisdom, to turn back into the hills.

Having gained a position in the hills from which he could view the prairie, he sat there, on his heavily breathing pony, and watched the troopers.

They had given up the chase, and turned about.

"White man no catch the Ute," was his thought.

He recalled the whisky given to him by Foggy Ike.

He took out the bottle, held it up, and looked at the whisky lovingly, as the sunlight showed its color.

He smiled expansively.

"The white man's fire-water is good!" he said.

He tipped the bottle to his lips, and he did not take it down until he had drained it.

He flung the bottle on the rocks when it was empty, and sat enjoying the warm and comfortable sensation which the whisky produced.

Foggy Ike, in giving the Ute that whisky, had counted merely on his own capacity for fire-water, not on that of an Indian who had not tasted the stuff for many months.

What was not enough to make Foggy Ike feel even weak in the legs was enough to wildly intoxicate this Ute.

His face grew hot, while his eyes widened and became glassy. As the whisky worked through his veins, he began to "see red."

The killing instinct, which is a strong trait in the aboriginal mind, came to the forefront; and he began to long to kill something. Most anything would do, but nothing could have suited him better than a white man.

He remembered vividly that he hated all white men, even Foggy Ike, who had given him that wonderful fire-water. Yet he would not kill Foggy Ike, for then he might get no more fire-water. But any other white man. Oh, if he could but meet a white man!

He recalled that the white men had taken the Indian hunting-grounds; they had encroached with their towns and their cities, their cattle-ranches, and their mines. They swarmed everywhere; a few years ago the Indians held the country unmolested. The game was gone, or going; no more the buffaloes roamed the plains, and in the hills the deer were every year becoming scarcer. The Indians believed that the white men were their enemies, and that soon the Indians would be gone, like the game.

As these thoughts floated through the mind of the Ute, he saw, far below him, at the prairie's edge, a white man on a horse.

His keen eyes told him that this white man was a trooper, for the blue of his uniform could be seen.

Of all white men, the Ute hated a trooper most; they were the fighting men of the white men, and they had often been arrayed in battle with the Utes.

His blood leaped.

He would ride down, and he would kill that white man!

He leaped on his pony, drew the rusty revolver that he had concealed in his blanket, and rode forth, searching for the white man.

When he reached the foot of the hills and saw the white man again, he recognized that this young fellow in the blue uniform of the United States Army was the Boy Bugler, whom he had seen with the famous Long Hair.

He did not doubt that the Boy Bugler had been with the troopers who had chased him; and that did not decrease his desire to slay this youth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRAVERY OF A GIRL.

As the reader has already seen, Letty Brockton was not only a beautiful girl, but a girl of spirit and high courage.

She did not intend to remain in that cavern prison where Foggy Ike had immured her a single moment longer than she was forced to.

She had not been in the place long when she tried to wriggle out of the cords which he had placed on her ankles and wrists.

She did not make much headway at first; in fact, the only thing she seemed to do was to set the cords tighter and cause herself intolerable pain.

Nevertheless, desperation drove her on in her efforts.

By and by, while Foggy Ike was reposing in the comfortable assurance that the girl was safe in the cavern, she stretched the cords on her wrists until she could slip one hand out of them.

Her hands were shapely and small, which made the task less difficult than if her hands had been large.

Having freed her wrists, she began, breathlessly, to untie the cords set on her ankles. With her fingers free, this was accomplished very quickly.

Having done this, she crept to the cavern entrance, where Foggy Ike had rolled some boulders and stones into position, and through the interstices she looked out.

She did not see any one, for her captor had ascended the hill to get a view of the open country.

Miss Letty now began to tug and pull at the stones, trying to displace them.

One tumbled down at her feet with such noise that she expected at every moment to hear Foggy Ike coming, drawn by the sound.

Foggy Ike did not come, though she armed herself with a small stone, and meant to give him battle there in the cavern entrance if he did appear.

One by one she pulled and pried out the stones, until she had a pathway open before her.

Then she crept softly and breathlessly out of her prison.

The hills were about her, and no man in sight.

She started off hurriedly, judging of her course by the sun, and seeking lower ground, knowing that her first task was to reach the prairies.

Foggy Ike heard her, after she had gone some yards; and from his high perch he beheld her.

"Great jumpin' panthers!" he exclaimed, under his breath, leaping up and staring "Put not yer trust in

women," as ther Scripter says. "How in Sam Hill did she git out o' that hole and ontie herself?"

He began to slide down from his perch. When he reached more level ground he started off in pursuit.

But Foggy Ike was not much of a runner. He had too long led a lazy and worthless existence to have much muscle, or much staying power.

As he lurched along in pursuit of the girl, hoping to overtake her without calling out, she overheard him.

She looked round, beheld him coming, and leaped with gazellelike speed down the hillside.

"Stop!" he bawled. "If yer don't stop, hanged if I don't shoot ther top o' yer head off! I'm tryin' ter befriend ye in this thing, and—"

She ran the faster.

She rather thought she preferred to be shot to being longer the prisoner of that odious creature.

Foggy Ike followed as fast as he could, slipping and sliding, stumbling and swearing, and now and then commanding her to stop.

She ran on all the faster, heading in a general downward direction.

As she came out upon the open prairie at the base of the hills, having run until it seemed to her she could not run another step, she beheld, not far away, a form in blue, on horseback; and, to her delirious joy, recognized the horseman as the Boy Bugler, her lover.

It seemed too good to be true, almost as if it were a dream, when she saw him there, just when she so needed him.

She cried out his name, and ran toward him.

The Boy Bugler beheld her with a start of surprise, and turned to ride toward her.

As he did so, the Ute messenger of Foggy Ike, crazed with bad whisky and inflamed with a lust for blood, and particularly the blood of a white man, rode out at him, swinging a tomahawk round his head.

The Boy Bugler saw him, and saw that he must meet this infuriated Indian, or be brained by him.

He threw up his rifle and fired.

A feather on the top of the Ute's head was sheared away by the bullet as if it had been cut with a knife.

As the Boy Bugler tried to fire again, the tomahawk of the Ute flashed through the air, aimed straight at the youth's head.

The Boy Bugler saw it launched, and dodged it with a stooping motion.

Then the redskin was upon him, swinging his rifle as a club.

The Boy Bugler tried to use his own rifle and shoot the Ute, but had to drop it and clutch the rifle of the Ute to keep from being knocked from the saddle.

He went out of the saddle, nevertheless, and the Ute

followed him, being dragged from his horse because he clung to his rifle when the Boy Bugler fell with it.

Then they were on the ground together, fighting like demons.

The girl ran toward the combatants, screaming at the top of her voice, frantic with fear for the youth whose life was imperiled.

She came up to them, and clutched the knife-hand of the Ute as it was lifted to strike the Boy Bugler.

She tore the knife out of his hand, or knocked it out, and it fell on the grass.

Then she seized a stone and tried to brain the Ute with it.

The Boy Bugler writhed from beneath the redskin, aided by her interference, and got out his own knife.

At this juncture, and while Foggy Ike, beholding this, was bounding as fast as he could down the rocks, hoping to intervene and have things take the turn he would wish them to take, a dozen mounted Utes came dashing up, and threw themselves on the young white man.

The girl screamed, and tried to rush to his assistance.

Two of the Indians seized her, and took out of her hands the rock which she had been about to use on the Ute.

The Ute messenger was not pleased with this interference, for he had counted on victory, in spite of everything, and he wanted to slay this white man.

The other Utes caught him and threw him back.

They asked him what he meant.

Then one of the Utes dimly beheld Foggy Ike, as the latter dodged back into the rocks, the old scoundrel deeming discretion the better part of valor.

The Ute raised the cry that white men were near.

This sent one of their number scurrying to the top of the nearest butte.

There he saw the troopers already mentioned, some distance off.

They were riding in the direction of the Utes, though they had not seen them, nor heard the rifle-shots, and were too far away to know that this exciting fight had taken place.

The Ute slipped down from the butte, after waving his hands to his companions, and came running with his message.

It was to the effect that troopers were near and would soon be charging the Utes. He believed that the man dimly seen—Foggy Ike—belonged with the troopers.

The only thing for the Utes to do, according to their notion at that moment, was to beat a hasty retreat, for they did not want to get into a fight with the troopers.

So they made prisoners of the girl and the Boy Bugler, and with them in their midst, mounted and tied to ponies, they retreated quickly from the dangerous vicinity.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOY BUGLER AS A PRISONER.

The one thing which had brought Buffalo Bill into that country at that time was the fact that the Utes were growing restless of government control and of life on their reservation.

They wanted their former privileges of a free and unrestricted life; they desired to rove about as much as they willed, and to hunt where they pleased, even though they encroached on lands now claimed by the white men.

The government had corralled them on a reservation, from which they were not permitted to stray; and though that reservation was half as large as an ordinary State, or nearly a third as large as the whole of England, it was not large enough to suit wandering redskins whose one desire was to rove at will, and who, heretofore, had known no such restriction.

It must be confessed, too, that the white people were a constant source of irritation, and did not themselves observe the reservation regulations. White men who had no right to be upon the reservation were found there often, hunting, or looking for gold, or merely wandering about.

Collisions between these white men and the Utes had often taken place.

Recently, in such a collision, a white man had been killed.

His slayer had been arrested by the sheriff of the nearest county and taken to jail, where he languished, and was soon to be tried for murder.

All these things tended to make the Utes ugly.

The government began to fear a Ute uprising, and had sent Buffalo Bill into the territory they occupied to ascertain the facts, and to do what he could to allay irritation and prevent trouble.

The Utes who had now captured the girl and the Boy Bugler felt that they were amply justified in their act.

They had found the Boy Bugler and the girl fighting a Ute.

Not long before, a white man had fought and killed Old Roman Nose.

They did not perhaps lay enough stress on the fact that Roman Nose had killed the white man.

More than this, the Utes who had captured the Boy Bugler and Miss Letty Brockton belonged to the younger set of Ute warriors.

These were the Utes who were forever creating trouble.

They had the hot and impatient blood of youth. They hated the white people with a fierce and deadly hatred. And as they had never personally met the white troopers in battle array they rather scorned the bluecoats,

instead of fearing them, like the older Utes who had been taught by bitter experience.

So now the young Ute bucks were jubilant.

It recalled the storied days of which they had heard much from their elders—the glorious old days when Utes went on the war-path, and brought home prisoners and scalps, and were the lords of the land, bidding defiance to white men and alien red men alike.

One thing that interested them very much was the bugle carried by Reed Wilson.

They asked by signs what it was. When he contrived to make them understand, they untied his hands, and signified to him that he was to sound it, that they might hear it.

The eyes of the Boy Bugler flashed when that command was given to him.

He put the bugle to his lips and blew loud and clear the call for help.

It rang and echoed through the near-by hills in a way to delight the young Utes.

They made him sound it again and again, and they laughed in glee and admiration.

They urged him to play other notes, which he did gladly enough, sending them out in a way that he hoped would reach the troopers, whom he knew to be somewhere in that country.

He spoke to the girl of what he was doing, being sure that the Utes could not understand his English.

Some of them could use a few English words, but they were not adepts in the language, and anything unfamiliar in the shaping of sentences was beyond them, so that the Boy Bugler felt safe in speaking to his sweetheart of his hopes.

It was strange to him to be with her, when he had believed steadfastly that she was already held in the Ute village; and he could hardly believe that she had not been there at all.

She told him of the white man who had kept her in the cavern, a white man she did not know, but whom, from her description, the Boy Bugler recognized as the old reprobate and vagabond Foggy Ike.

What had become of Foggy Ike, Miss Letty did not know; but the Ute who had been his messenger, and with whom the Boy Bugler had fought, was in this band, still well under the influence of the whisky which Foggy Ike had furnished him.

They journeyed rapidly toward the Ute village, reaching it by mid-afternoon, when they were given a greeting that was uproariously noisy and exciting.

Throughout the wearing journey the Boy Bugler had tried to maintain the courage of the girl by telling her that so long as their lives were spared they must keep up their spirits, and that he felt sure some chance to escape would come to them.

But when the warriors, the women, and the children

swarmed forth and surrounded her, and she saw their numbers, together with the position of the village, the hopes of Letty Brockton dropped to the zero-point.

She did not see how escape could be hoped for from that place, with all those eyes to watch the lodge where she would be held.

Still the Boy Bugler bade her not to despair, seeing that her fears were increased.

His own courage was not as high as he tried to make her believe it to be; but that fact he kept to himself.

His bugle was the thing that again attracted attention, and when the Utes of the village learned what it was for they demanded that it be heard.

Hence the Boy Bugler again had the privilege of free hands, and he blew the bugle to the perfect satisfaction of the excited redskins.

But there were some of the leading Utes who were not so well pleased with what had been done as were the young bucks who had brought in these prisoners.

These were the older warriors and chiefs, who long ago had learned to fear the power of the white man, and the quick-shooting guns and the flashing sabers of the troopers.

They spoke to Young Roman Nose, who was of their mind about it.

Then a council was called, in the midst of which the prisoners were placed.

Young Roman Nose questioned them, asking particularly about the troopers and about Long Hair.

The Boy Bugler understood the drift of the questioning.

Even though bound, he rose in the midst of the council, standing beside the girl, who crouched on the lodge floor. He swept his searching eyes about, and looked into the faces of the assembled braves and chiefs. He saw anxiety in many of the faces.

Then he directed his remarks to Young Roman Nose, and made himself understandable by many gestures.

He demanded that he and the girl should be at once released; that they should be placed on ponies, unbound, and turned from the village, when they would endeavor to find their way to the fort; and he threatened the destruction of the village by the troopers if this was not done.

This was a brave and creditable thing to do, if done right.

The trouble was that the Boy Bugler overdid it.

His threats of punishment were pictured so vividly that the resentment of the Utes was aroused, and became defiance.

Chiefs and warriors sprang up, flourishing knives, and shouting in a way to make the girl cry out with fright.

They harangued Young Roman Nose and the white prisoners, declared that they were ready to fight, and that if the white troopers thought the Ute warriors were

cowards and squaws let them come on and discover the truth.

They leaped to the center of the lodge and struck their tomahawks into the lodge-pole with resounding blows.

The Boy Bugler cowered before the storm he had raised.

Their language, so far as he could understand it, was pantomimic, as his had largely been, but it was plain enough. They were enraged against the trooper who threatened them with destruction, and they declared that if the troopers tried to rush the village there would be a great fight and carnage.

The Boy Bugler dropped to a seat on the ground at the girl's side.

"I've raised the Old Harry," he said, "and I didn't mean to; I only thought to scare them into letting us go. They'll not do it now, and we'll have to plan for an escape to-night. We're all right for awhile; and before things get worse for us we'll be out of here."

Letty Brockton had rare faith in the ability of her young lover. She looked at him with shining eyes.

"It doesn't seem possible to get away," she whispered; "but I know you will do what you can. But, oh, you must be careful! What if you should be killed?"

"I shall be careful," he said; "I shall not be killed. We must get out of this horrible place. I believe that Providence threw you and me together here that I might be in a position to help you to escape. I am going to believe that. And you must be brave—brave—brave!"

His courageous words cheered her up, and they cheered and inspired his own heart as well.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOGGY IKE AGAIN.

The Boy Bugler was immured in a dark lodge not far from the center of the village.

His hope that the girl would be imprisoned with him had been dashed to the ground.

Nevertheless, as he was dragged away from her, he cried out to her to be of good cheer.

Yet he was much cast down when he was thrust into that filthy lodge, where he lay bound hand and foot, with a Ute guard squatting near the entrance.

He knew there was great excitement in the village. Warriors passed and repassed in front of the lodge, talking in low gutturals, and there was still much wailing among the women over the death of Old Roman Nose, whose funeral rites had not yet taken place.

Darkness had come, and the lights of the lodge fires were kept so low that they smoldered.

Soon within the council-lodge drums began to boom monotonously.

The Ute guard still crouched near the entrance of the

prison lodge, though his attention was drawn to the gathering of the warriors for the council.

The Boy Bugler up to this time had worked at his bonds with such sly stealth that he really had accomplished little. He seemed to have done no more than set the knots tighter and drawn the cords closer about his wrists.

He put greater strength and fury now into his struggles to break the bonds or draw his wrists out of them.

He strained until it seemed that his heart was bursting.

Then he felt the relief of a slipping knot.

In another minute he had freed one hand, slipping the loosened cord down over his wrist.

He lay back, bathed with perspiration, his heart throbbing with hope and stronger determination. His wrists ached and burned; it seemed to him that they were bleeding and raw.

He lay back, panting, listening to the booming of the drums and the occasional yells, and also listening for some movement of the guarding brave at the entrance.

He could see the shadow of this brave, who sat close by the entrance, with gun across his knees.

The brave still looked in the direction of the council-lodge and apparently had heard none of the Boy Bugler's efforts.

When he had somewhat regained his breath and strength the Boy Bugler bent over and began to untie the cords that held his ankles.

It was not an easy task, even though his fingers were free, for the knots were set hard and were of buckskin.

By straining he lengthened the buckskin, and by degrees worked one foot free.

Again he was compelled to rest. He also needed time to get a freer circulation of blood, for the constricting cords had almost stopped the circulation.

Near him lay his bugle. The Utes had apparently thought it some kind of talisman, or that to tamper with it might bring bad luck to them.

Having freed himself, the Boy Bugler tried to crawl toward the lodge entrance.

But his effort was heard.

The guard jumped up and came and looked in.

The Boy Bugler had been quick in his movements, and was lying on the ground, apparently in his old position.

The Ute grunted a guttural threat, looked hard at the recumbent figure, and then went outside and again took his position.

The Boy Bugler saw that he could not get out by the entrance, and that he could not hope to surprise the guard.

As he lay thinking over the situation a man came up to the lodge and spoke to the guard.

The guard moved aside, and the man entered.

Though the light was not good, the Boy Bugler was able to see the form and face of his visitor.

The man was Foggy Ike.

"Hello!" he said, stopping in front of the youth.

The Boy Bugler knew the man at once. Letty Brockton had been held a prisoner in the cavern by this man. And he had seen Foggy Ike at various times in the town and near the fort, and recalled the reports that Foggy Ike was a worthless scamp who made his home with the Utes.

"Hello!" he said coolly, responding to Foggy Ike's salutation. "I hope you've come to help me out of this?"

Foggy Ike came forward, and then dropped to the floor in the Indian fashion.

"I'd like ter help ye," he said, "and I will if I kin. That's why I chipped in with the girl. She was stole from her home by Old Roman Nose. I induced him ter let me keep her fer him, with ther intention on my part of, soon as I could, returnin' her to her friends. I was holdin' her in the cave out in ther hills, 'cause I knowed Utes was sashayin' round and it was dangerous fer her ter be seen. She wouldn't believe that my intentions was good; so she cut out, and you see how she run herself and you inter trouble. I knowed she would do that very thing, and so I kep' her tied. I dunno what I kin do now, but I'll do what I kin ter help her and you."

"I guess you're a scoundrel!"

"Hard words don't break no bones," as ther Scripter says."

"You live here with the Utes?" said the Boy Bugler.

He did not believe the old liar's statements regarding the girl, but began to hope to get something of value in the way of information.

"I been livin' with 'em a goodish spell," said Foggy Ike. "They treats me well, and I kinder like 'em. They're sorter mad right now, on account of several things, and I'm lookin' fer trouble."

"They will be fools, if they attack the troopers."

"That's what I tell 'em; but they don't put much store by my opinion, bein' as I'm a white man."

"You say maybe you can help me? How? I'm in great danger here, and so is Miss Brockton. If you can do anything for us, it ought to be done without delay. I'm afraid we couldn't trust you. Your manner wasn't friendly to her."

Foggy Ike glanced cautiously toward the entrance.

"Some o' these here Utes kin understand more English than they let on to," he warned. "Jes' as well ter be keerful, ye know. I dunno as that feller knows a word o' English, but he may."

"Go on; I'll be careful."

He had not told Foggy Ike that he had succeeded in freeing his hands and feet.

"If I help ye I've got ter leave ther Utes forever," said Foggy Ike. "You kin see that. They wouldn't never fergive it, and if they come across me they'd stick a knife in me quick's wink."

"Yes, you will run risk, I don't doubt. But you will be doing it in a good cause. I don't speak of myself, but of Miss Brockton."

"And if I ain't able ter ever come back hyar ter ther Utes, ye kin see that I shall be homeless. I lives with 'em, and I eats with 'em, and I is able ter take life hyar purty tol'able easy. I don't need much clo'es."

"Yes, I see."

"All them things I has gotter give up, if I help you and the girl."

He paused, that this might sink well into the youth's mind.

"I'm gittin' too old ter work."

He paused again.

"So, there 'tis. I cuts me off frum a livin', when I helps you two ter git away."

"Yes, I understand."

He wondered what was coming next, but was not surprised when it came:

"So, there 'tis. I've got ter have some pay fer losin' my home here. It'd throw me on ther streets at Fetterman a beggar, and I'd be jes' a tramp, 'cause I can't work. So, as I wanter say, I'll have ter have pay."

"You shall be paid," said the Boy Bugler.

"Jes' so. Glad ter hear ye say it. I wants five thousand dollars. I writ that sum ter Buffalo Bill, but I reckon maybe he'd not be willin', though I tried ter impress him proper about it. If you'll gimme yer solemn promise that you and yer friends will git tergether fer me five thousand dollars, I'll take a leg off but I'll git you and the girl outer this place ter-night. What d'yer say?"

The Boy Bugler feared to trust this man; yet he must.

"We'll do it," he said. "We'll raise it somehow. You shall have it, if I have to borrow it and beg all my friends to go my surety. You shall have it."

"Korrect!" said the old sinner. "That's settled. I'll git ye outer hyar ter-night, er take a leg off tryin'"

He rose to leave the lodge.

"But when?" said the Boy Bugler anxiously.

Foggy Ike turned about and looked at him with mystery in his rumshot eyes, and beckoned toward the Ute guard.

"Now ain't ther time, as you kin see. To'rst mornin' will be better. After things has quieted down some and the Injuns gits sleepy. A feller couldn't move out there now 'thout bein' seen. I was seen come hyar, but I was ther special friend of Old Roman Nose, and so they don't object. When they find out they'll shoot me so full er arrers that I'll look like a fat pin-cushion; that is, if they gits ther chanst. I don't intend ter give 'em ther chanst. So ye see ther resks I'm takin'. It's wu'th all ther money I'll git, fer supportin' me hereafter, and a good deal more."

He blew his nose sympathetically, and the Boy Bugler

could almost fancy that in the eyes of the old rascal tears were standing in pools.

"Good-by till later," said Foggy Ike, his voice husky and hypocritical. "I'll tip ther guard out hyar orders ter watch ye clost, jes' fer a blind, ye know."

He passed out through the entrance, and the Boy Bugler heard him saying something to the Indian in Ute.

"Can he be depended on?" thought the Boy Bugler. "Shall I wait for him to act, or shall I take the matter into my own hands and try to do something now, while that drum booming is going on, and the Indians are excited and have their attention drawn to the council-lodge?"

It was a question he found trouble in answering.

It answered itself, however, when he tried to roll to the edge of the lodge and look out from under the lifted lodge skin.

The guard at the entrance became aggressively and angrily active.

He leaped into the lodge with a guttural cry, and rushed at the Boy Bugler.

The latter cleverly rolled back from the lodge wall, in such a way that it would not be noticed that his hands and feet were free.

The guard stood before him, threatening him in Ute, and shaking his tomahawk.

"Your tomahawk language is plain enough, and I suppose what you're saying emphasizes it," said the Boy Bugler, trying to be cool. "Just take the thing away. I promise not to go out—yet."

The Ute dropped the tomahawk to his side, said something in a sharp tone, and returned to his former position outside.

"That white man is right," was the Boy Bugler's conclusion. "All the Utes are at present too wide-awake."

Resolving to wait calmly until a more favorable time came, he lay listening to the drum beating and to the hum and noise that came from the council-lodge, which was not far away.

Now and then he heard the high voice of some Ute orator haranguing with native eloquence.

Occasionally some one, usually a woman, came peering in at the lodge entrance, and was driven away by the guard.

The council came to an end long after midnight.

Even after that the village did not at once sink into quiet.

The hours dragged slowly enough for the Boy Bugler. By and by it seemed to him that daylight was breaking.

Still Foggy Ike delayed his coming.

"Something has happened, or else the old scamp is playing me false," was the thought of the young prisoner. "I've got to get out of here myself. If we can escape from the village we ought to be far from it before

daylight comes. Otherwise, we shall be simply overtaken and dragged back."

He rolled again with stealthy movement to the side of the lodge, wondering if the guard outside were not by this time asleep.

To his astonishment, as he did so, the lodge skin there was lifted.

Beneath it he saw the face of Foggy Ike, wrapped about by an Indian blanket.

There came a grin to the bloated face of the old vagabond as his eyes looked into the eyes of the Boy Bugler. He put out a hand and beckoned with his dirty fingers.

"Come!" he whispered.

He lifted the lodge skin higher, and the Boy Bugler silently rolled through the opening.

He was outside the lodge, under the starlight, with the village soundly sleeping round him.

Foggy Ike drew a knife.

"Ther cords on ye," he whispered.

"I'm out of them—long ago!"

"Phew!" sounded Foggy Ike's soft whistle of astonishment.

He had a second blanket beside him, and indicated that the Boy Bugler was to wrap himself in it, Indian fashion.

This the Boy Bugler did, hurrying rapidly, thereby soon causing himself to breathe so heavily that Foggy Ike gave him warning.

"Shet down yer exhaust-pipe," he said. "Injuns sleep light as cats. If we're diskivered and can't git away, remember that I'm goin' ter throw myself on yer back and holler fer help, and then tell ther Utes that I seen yer tryin' ter git away and was doin' my durndest ter stop ye. I'll haf ter do that, ter save my own neck, so's I kin make another try fer yer."

He rose quietly behind the lodge, and drew the Boy Bugler to his feet.

"Over there is ther lodge holding ther girl," he whispered. "To'rst it now, with no more noise than a crawlin' lizard."

He led the way softly, stepping along as if he were many years younger. The excitement of what he was attempting buoyed him.

"There's ther lodge she's in," he said, at last.

He had approached it from the rear.

He stood still, listening, with the Boy Bugler quivering at his heels. To realize that just beyond those lodge walls was the girl he loved, and whose peril was so great, was enough to set the Boy Bugler's nerves to jumping.

"I've already warned her ter be ready," said Foggy Ike. "And I reckon she ain't likely ter fergit an ap'intment like that."

He chuckled.

"So you stay right hyar a minute, and ther thing's done."

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

He stepped up to the lodge wall, and shook it softly. The Boy Bugler saw the lodge skin lifted from the bottom, and in the opening appeared the face of Letty Brockton.

He could have shouted his delight, but he knew that in reality their danger was as great as ever, and wisely restrained his emotions.

Nevertheless, he stepped forward, and catching the girl by the arm he assisted her to her feet.

He had hardly done so when the guard stationed in front uttered an ear-splitting yell and came bounding round the lodge.

He had discovered this attempted rescue of the girl prisoner.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ESCAPE.

"Git!" whispered Foggy Ike.

The Boy Bugler did not need the admonition.

He sprang away from the lodge, clutching the girl by the hand.

Foggy Ike pushed his lumpy body close against the lodge wall, and was not seen by the Indian guard who rushed past him in pursuit of the fugitives.

It had been the intention of Foggy Ike, as his words had shown, to make an outcry, and pretend to try to recapture the prisoners, if the effort at escape was discovered. That was, to his mind, a justifiable measure of self-defense.

He improved on that, however, when he found that he had not been seen by the aroused guard, who was bounding on in pursuit of the Boy Bugler and the girl. He crowded hard against the dark lodge wall; and when the pursuing and yelling guard had passed on he threw himself to the ground and crawled farther along in the shadow.

There he deliberately lay down close by the wall of another lodge, having cast aside the disguising Indian blanket. Drawing his battered hat over his eyes, he pretended to fall into a half-drunken stupor.

He felt sure that if found thus the Utes would think he had been swallowing too much fire-water, with the usual result, and would not dream that he had been engaged in helping the prisoners.

The yells of the aroused guard were stirring the village into a wild commotion.

Indians came running from lodges, and heads popped from entrances, while shrill calls and questions filled the air.

The Boy Bugler ran straight toward the open country, which, fortunately for him, was not far away on that side.

The girl ran with a speed equal to his, and needed no

aid. She realized the necessity, and was as heroic in her determination as he was in his.

Foggy Ike had said quite truthfully that he had gone to her some time before and acquainted her with the plans he was forming for her escape.

She would not have believed him, recalling what he had done, if he had not demonstrated his truth-telling in this particular instance by cutting the cords that held her hands and feet.

He told her, what she could hardly credit, that his intentions had all along been to restore her to the white people, and that the things he had done had been with that end in view, whatever she might have thought of them.

He informed her that he had talked with the Boy Bugler, and that when it was safe to do so he and the Boy Bugler would appear at the side of this lodge, when she must be ready to go along with them in an effort to escape; but that until that time she must pretend to sleep, lying close up against the wall of the lodge; and, above all things, that she must persistently keep the Indians from discovering that her hands and feet had been freed.

With these evidences of his good-will and honesty, she had, still doubting him, obeyed his instructions; and his words so far had come true. She was with the youth she loved—the Boy Bugler—and they were running at top speed out into that darkness which was a screen of safety.

Behind her the girl heard the yelling Utes, sounds which put speed into her feet and strength into her heart. The touch of the strong hand of the youth was of itself power-giving and sustaining.

The Boy Bugler was shrewd enough to turn aside after he had passed beyond the lodges out into the darkness.

He knew he could not be seen, because of the gloom, and that if his trail was followed, torches, or dogs, would have to be used.

If torches were resorted to by the Utes, that meant slow work.

Then his heart thrilled as he heard the vociferous baying of Indian dogs.

But the dogs that night, as he soon discovered, had no nose for trailing. A bull buffalo had been killed that day, and they had feasted on the entrails until they were overgorged. As a consequence the odor of blood was so strong in their nostrils that they could not pick up and follow so elusive a scent as that made by human feet.

The dogs ran in baffled circles along the edge of the village, with little incursions out into the gloom; but, aside from giving the fugitives a bad fright, they really did nothing.

The Indians raved at them. Then they produced torches and got down to the serious business of trailing with these.

Hope was rising strong in the heart of the Boy Bugler and of the girl at his side.

"If you can hold up a little while, we can reach the hills over here on our left," he said, as they stopped a minute to rest and regain breath. "I marked them well when I was brought here, and I know how to reach them."

"Don't trouble about me," she said. "I will stand it. We must reach those hills."

"I might carry you."

"No!" she said. "I am yet strong."

They ran on.

The Indians, the flashing torches, and the baying dogs were being left behind.

CHAPTER XV.

WITH BUFFALO BILL.

Too long has the doings of Buffalo Bill been neglected in these pages.

He had not been inactive.

Twice he had visited the fort, and he had put into effect some plans for the assault on the Ute village.

He intended to creep into the village in advance of the assault and secure the safety of the prisoners by getting with them, and perhaps getting them out of the place before the assault was made.

He had also done a great deal of trailing, and had learned nearly all that the reader knows.

When the Boy Bugler and the girl fled out of the village into the darkness, Buffalo Bill was close up to the border of it, but on the opposite side, and was on the point of entering it, in a heroic effort to save the lives of the prisoners before the assault of the troopers should be ordered.

The troopers were not far away, under the command of Colonel Vandiver himself; they had been able to gain a close position, and go into hiding, without discovery, by the very clever work of the scout.

When the tumult broke forth with such startling suddenness, ripping the quiet night air with a very bedlam of hideous sound, Buffalo Bill knew that it indicated the escape of the prisoners, or their attempted escape, and that his plans would have to be altered.

He ran round the village toward the point where that volume of confused sound was concentrating, and he heard there the baying of the baffled dogs as he thus ran.

That told its own story, the baffled tones indicating that the dogs could not follow the trail.

Then the torches flashed their lights; and by them the searching and excited Utes were beheld.

"Ah! The prisoners have got out of the village, and are getting away! Good for them! The Boy Bugler must be a clever young fellow."

In fact, the Boy Bugler's ability went up many degrees in the scout's estimation, when he saw the things that were now taking place.

It is not an easy thing to escape from an Indian village when closely guarded, as the scout had more than once discovered in his own efforts along those lines, and he reckoned the ability of the Boy Bugler accordingly.

When Buffalo Bill gained the opposite side of the Ute village the Utes were out there in force, with their dogs,

and were searching with torches, so that the scout had to be careful, to keep from running into them.

He tried to determine the direction which the escaping prisoners had taken, and found it difficult; for he had to depend on what he could hear of the Ute talk, and the Utes were themselves sadly puzzled and baffled.

Buffalo Bill discovered quickly that his guesses concerning the identity of the fugitives was correct.

The Boy Bugler and the girl were the ones who had been followed there and whose trail was now being sought.

Having learned this, the scout kept off at some distance from the searching-parties, watching them, and being guided by their torches.

The Utes did not dream that a strong force of troopers under command of the colonel of that district was not far off, only waiting word from the Long Hair to make a rush upon the village.

If the Utes had known that, they would have been thrown into a panic, and would have retreated for the purpose of getting themselves in fighting trim to meet the troopers.

Buffalo Bill was sure the troopers would make no movement until they had word from him; hence he was able to trail along not far from the torch-bearers, and so take advantage of whatever they discovered.

What they discovered was little enough.

They continued the work until daylight.

As the light brightened, Buffalo Bill stole away into a narrow coulée, where he had his horse hidden.

He intended to strike into the hills, in the hope of there picking up the trail of the youth and the girl.

He saw no Indians as he rode out of the coulée, nor any when he rode into the hills.

He was too experienced, however, to believe that they had given over the search; for when an Indian is thus aroused he is usually an implacable trailer.

After entering the hills a short distance Buffalo Bill came upon an Indian pony, fully saddled and bridled, that had no doubt thrown its rider during the night and escaped.

The scout captured it with his lariat, and led it along as he continued his search.

Then, to his astonishment, he heard his name called.

The voice seemed to float out of the air.

He looked about, and on the top of a sharp peak not far off he saw the Boy Bugler.

The latter was beckoning.

When Buffalo Bill rode toward the little peak, the Boy Bugler disappeared.

He came in sight near the bottom of the peak, running, and hurried forth to meet the scout.

He was much excited, and was almost frantic in his speech.

"Right over there—I saw her; she did not stay where I told her to, when I went up to the top of the peak to get a look over the country; and the Utes have seen her, and are trying to get her. She doesn't know it yet; and—"

He stopped, out of breath, too much excited to speak clearly.

"Up here, and lead the way!" commanded the scout, pointing to his led pony.

The Boy Bugler bounded into the saddle.

He set the pony at a gallop, and began to ride swiftly round the base of the peak.

As he and Buffalo Bill came out into view of the open land the scout beheld a sight that stirred his pulses.

Out there in the level grass-land stood the girl, bewildered and uncertain as to what she should do, while swooping down toward her were a number of mounted Utes.

"Ride hard!" the scout yelled to the Boy Bugler.

He applied spurs and quirt to his horse, and sent it forward at racing-speed.

The Boy Bugler imitated his example, riding hard at his side.

The Boy Bugler yelled loudly to the girl.

She saw him and his companion, and began to run toward them.

The Utes came on with hideous yells.

Like a whirlwind, the two horses bore down on the girl, swerving to turn, that they might race away from the Utes, the Boy Bugler again yelling instructions to her.

The Utes began to fire upon the scout and the youth.

Then the daring scout caught the girl to his saddle, while the arrows flew in a shower, and the Boy Bugler blew a ringing blast to summon the troopers, having been instructed to do that by the scout as that wild rescuing swoop was made.

With the girl held on the horse in front of him, the bold scout bent low over her, shielding her body thus with his own, and drove the horse toward the sheltering hills.

The Boy Bugler galloped just behind him, sending forth blast after blast on his bugle, notes that echoed and reechoed through the cañons and gorges.

But the Utes still pursued, yelling like mad, lashing their ponies, and firing at the fugitives with arrows and rifle-bullets.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST STAND.

Foggy Ike had not found it necessary to play for a very long time his assumed rôle of drunken stupor, for he discovered that he had not been seen, and was not suspected.

"Whoo-ee!" he whispered to himself.

He rose to a sitting posture, and fanned his fat face with his shabby hat.

"This doing too many things is what makes a man tired. I reckon if I ever git that five thousand I'll work fer it, and earn it, and I was cal'lating to git it without work; I hate work. The only difference between a white man and an Injun is that ther white man works and ther Injun don't, which ther same is ther reason why I prefers Injuns. Whoo-ee!"

He fanned himself again, the sweat standing out on his fat face, for he had been thrown into a spasm of perspiring anxiety and fear.

"Whoo-ee! Well, my hair's still in place, and ther Utes don't know what I've done. But I reckon it'll pay me ter see what they're doin'. If they catches them two turtle-doves—"

He rolled to his feet; and then he hastened out of the village, following that line of flickering torches.

He soon found himself close by Young Roman Nose. "What's the matter?" he asked, in Ute.

Young Roman Nose thrust the light of the torch into Foggy Ike's face.

"You do not know?"

"How should I?" he replied, in Ute. "I am not a medicine-man, and do not talk with the spirits. And I have been asleep."

"The white prisoners have escaped," said Young Roman Nose. "It is a marvelous thing; for they were tied, and they were guarded."

He again thrust his flaming torch into the fat face of the white man and seemed to look at him suspiciously.

The sweat once more oozed out of Foggy Ike.

"Gee!" he gurgled. "If he discovers what I've been doin'! Well, I'm wantin' ter leave ther Utes, anyhow. Someway, they've not been as kind as they used ter be lately. They're grumblin' about my eatin' too much, and because I don't paint up and prance round and play howlin' waryer. I reckon I've stayed my visit too long among 'em. And so, seein' that soon they'd be invitin' me out, and knowing that ther best friend I had 'mong 'em, Old Roman Nose, is gone, I cal'lated that it was wisdom fer me ter git holt of some money and then hike out fer other climates. If I git that five thousand, it'll fix me solid fer ther rest of my days. I kin git a bed in a cheap boardin'-house some'eres, and have all the good red likker ter drink that I craves fer ther balance of my mortal career. Whoo-ee!"

The thought made him thirsty.

When daylight came and the search continued, he found himself, after a time, separated from the Indians. By and by he worked his way into the hills, looking carefully for a trail.

It was his plan now, if he could by any chance discover the fugitives, to conduct them by a route he had mapped out, back to the fort, and there proclaim himself their succor and savior.

He was sure he had made a good impression on the mind of the Boy Bugler, and he had the Boy Bugler's promise of that five thousand dollars.

Then he was startled by hearing yells, and discovered that the Boy Bugler, the girl, and Buffalo Bill, were riding toward him at top speed, and that trailing behind them were a number of mounted Utes.

"As ther Scripter says, 'It's ther unexpected that's al-lers happenin'!" he muttered, crouching in some bushes, where he could see the chase and at the same time keep out of sight.

It was a pretty chase. Soon he saw that the Utes were being left behind.

Somewhat to his dismay, he observed that the Boy Bugler and his companions would come close by his hiding-place.

He was wondering what, in this emergency, he ought to do; for he wanted to be on the winning side, whichever way this perilous game went.

The scout and his companions came galloping straight up to the bushes in which Foggy Ike had taken concealment.

When in front of them the scout leaped to the ground and helped down the girl.

The horse he had been riding staggered. It had been sorely wounded. The scout and the girl were hardly off its back before it fell.

That was why the flight had stopped right there.

The Boy Bugler jumped from his horse and gave his hand to the girl.

He ran with her into the bushes, while Buffalo Bill ejected empty cartridge-shells from his repeating rifle and refilled the magazine.

"As ther Scripter says, 'Now is ther time ter speak, er ferever after hold yer peace!'"

With this characteristic exclamation, Foggy Ike made his appearance, to the amazement of the Boy Bugler and the girl, who had not dreamed that the bushes concealed any one.

"In Heaven's name! is it you?" cried the Boy Bugler, in tones which caused Buffalo Bill to turn and look.

"Hyar ter help ye," said Foggy Ike, deeming that it was the part of wisdom to make this statement at once. "I got round in front hyar, thinkin' maybe I could lend ye a hand o' some kind."

"Well, you can, if you're armed," said the Boy Bugler. "We'll be attacked here soon by the Utes. Cody's horse was shot, and that made it impossible for us to go on. But we're expecting reinforcements, and then we'll make it warm for those rascals out there."

Seeing that the Long Hair had turned at bay, the pursuing Utes stopped out in the plain, well beyond the range of his rifle, and began to consult.

Buffalo Bill took advantage of it to step into the bushes, where he had heard the voice of Foggy Ike.

"Yer see I'm still tryin' ter help ther girl?" said Foggy Ike, with insinuating manner. "I been at it frum ther first. She'll tell ye, if she ain't already done it, that I helped her there in ther Ute village; and he'll tell ye what I done fer him. And when I thought maybe I could do somethin' more fer 'em I slipped out hyar. I seen ye comin', and got in hyar, thinkin' maybe in some way I could be useful ter ye."

At the same time, the slippery rascal was making up his mind to tell the Utes that these men had captured him and held him there, if the coming fight went in favor of the Utes. Whichever way he fell, he planned to have a soft bed to fall on.

Buffalo Bill looked at the rascal doubtfully.

"You are the man who sent me that anonymous letter!" he said promptly.

"I had good reasons fer sendin' it, which I'll explain ter yer when we've got more time," Foggy Ike apologized. "Yes, I sent it, and I said somewhat ther same things ter ther youngster hyar, as he'll tell ye. Yer see, knowin' that I'd have ter leave ther Utes forever, and not bein' able because of my infirmities ter work, I had ter negotiate ter git somethin' out of it by which I could live hereafter, yer see."

"Cody," said the Boy Bugler, "I believe he is all right. He did bargain with me for a payment of five thousand dollars, but he risked his life to get us out of the village."

Foggy Ike's face beamed.

"I knowed he'd say it," he said. "I did that—resked my life ter git 'em out er ther hands of ther Utes; and I resked it in comin' here, thinkin' maybe I could help 'em by doin' it."

Buffalo Bill read the duplicity behind that rum-soaked face. He saw the villainous and cowardly nature of the man, and knew the hidden thoughts of his heart. And he scorned Foggy Ike, and loathed him.

Yet it was not a time to speak his mind.

"Sound the bugle!" he said to the Boy Bugler.

Clear and strong rose the bugle-call.

The Utes heard it.

They had heard it before, and did not know now what it meant.

They believed that in the bushes on the crest of that hill were only the Long Hair, the Boy Bugler, and the girl, without help near them.

But that strong and sweet bugle-call, as it went floating through the hollows of the hills, was heard by the men for whom it was intended—the troopers under Colonel Vandiver.

The Utes, after a hasty consultation, decided to charge the hill.

They were in a towering rage, and reckless of consequences.

They came on, riding in their circling fashion to destroy the aim of their foes.

As they thus advanced they discharged rifles and arrows, and broke forth in wild and frenzied yells for the purpose of startling and confusing the whites.

They retreated, when a saddle was emptied by Buffalo Bill's deadly rifle.

Yet they rallied and returned to the attack, again circling, still more determined.

Their charge was met in a way of which they had not dreamed.

They heard a thundering of hoofs, apparently from behind the hill.

Then, to their amazement, they saw a body of blue-uniformed troopers dash round the base of the hill, and come charging at them, with sabers swinging and loud cheers ringing.

The Indians made a temporary stand, firing on the troopers and at the bushes on the crest of the ridge; then they broke and fled wildly, scattering for safety over the plain.

* * * * *

"Buffler Bill, I has got my ticket!"

A Ute bullet fired at the bushes had found lodgment in the breast of Foggy Ike, and he had tumbled backward, badly wounded and bleeding.

The scout knelt by his side.

"Buffler," said the old vagabond, "I ain't done nothin' much ter count in my favor up yester; but I reely goes easier, knowin' that them two turtle-doves is safe. I didn't have ther best of intentions, I acknowledges now, when ther ain't no more use er lyin'; but I is glad, anyhow, that they're safe, and that ther troopers come. It's a Ute bullet in hyer, and I believe 'twas shot inter me by Young Roman Nose. But no matter, I'm goin'!"

When the troopers returned from their brief pursuit of the fleeing Utes Foggy Ike was dead.

The Ute trouble had blown itself out without much of a conflagration, though the forces that had been at work might have spread fire and death throughout all the border.

As a final word, let me say to the reader that the Boy Bugler, some time afterward, claimed the White Flower of Fetterman Prairie as his bride.

THE END.

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